

The views of students with dyslexia on the transition to secondary school – The  
importance of self-advocacy

Samuel J Kelly

University of East London

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# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## Abstract

The transition to secondary school can be a stressful and challenging process for young people, especially those with special educational needs. While research acknowledges the importance of additional support for students with dyslexia at post-secondary transition, a systematic literature review indicated that very little research has studied their experience during transition to secondary school. Additionally, there is a growing evidence base for the importance of vulnerable students being taught to self-advocate during transition, though limited research has investigated its efficacy for young people with dyslexia. To address these issues, qualitative exploratory research was conducted with nine young people with dyslexia, who had recently transitioned to secondary school. Data collection involved two semi-structured interviews which were both analysed using thematic analysis. The first interview sought to explore both the experiences of young people with dyslexia during transition, as well as what they found supportive during this process. Findings highlighted the importance of understanding and disclosing dyslexia; requesting appropriate support; knowing strengths and areas for development; adequate information about transition; support from friends and family. Using these findings, the researcher developed five draft self-advocacy based materials which sought to support young people with dyslexia during transition. The second interview explored the views of participants on these materials. The research indicated that the materials would be useful for preparing young people with dyslexia for the transition to secondary school. The materials were then refined based on the feedback of participants. The findings of this research highlighted the importance of transition planning for young people with dyslexia and the potential efficacy of self-advocacy based support.

*Keywords:* dyslexia, self-advocacy, transition

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## Student Declaration

University of East London

School of Psychology

Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

### Declaration

I declare that while registered as a research degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within the thesis.

Sam Kelly

Signature: .....

Date: 24th April 2015

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

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# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## Table of Contents

<b>Title Page.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Student Declaration.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>1. Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
1.1 Overview of the Chapter.....	1
1.2 Defining Dyslexia.....	1
1.3 The Importance of Research investigating the Transition to Secondary for Dyslexic students.....	3
1.4 Context of the Reseach.....	4
1.4.1 National Context.....	4
1.4.2 Local context.....	5
1.5 Researcher Position.....	6
1.6 Contribution of the Current Research to Previous Research Knowledge.....	7

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## **2. Chapter 2: Literature Review**

2.1 Overview of the Chapter.....	10
2.2 Dyslexia, Transition, and Self-advocacy.....	10
2.2.1 Involving young people in transition planning.....	10
2.2.2 Defining self-advocacy.....	10
2.2.3 Promoting young people to self-advocate during transition.....	11
2.3 Three Areas of Key Research.....	12
2.4 Systematic Search.....	12
2.5 Critical Analysis of Key Research.....	13
2.5.1 The efficacy of self-advocacy and transition.....	13
2.5.2 Dyslexia and transition.....	19
2.5.3 Dyslexia and self-advocacy.....	24
2.6 Conclusions, Implications and the Development of Research Questions.....	26

## **3. Chapter 3: Methodology and Data Collection**

3.1 Overview of the Chapter.....	29
3.2 Conceptual Framework.....	29
3.2.1 Ontology.....	29
3.2.2 Epistemology.....	31
3.3 Purpose of the Research.....	31
3.4 Research Design.....	32
3.5 Research Participants and Recruitment Procedure.....	34
3.6 Procedure.....	36
3.7 Strategies for data gathering.....	40

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

3.8 Data Analysis.....	42
3.9 Validity and Trustworthiness.....	47
3.10 Ethical Issues.....	49

### **4. Chapter 4: Findings**

4.1 Chapter Overview.....	51
4.2 Overarching Themes and Subthemes for Phase 1 Data Analysis.....	51
4.3 Theme 1.1: Transition – The Move to Secondary School.....	52
4.3.1 Subtheme 1.1a: Positive expectations and perceptions.....	52
4.3.2 Subtheme 1.1b: Worries and concerns about starting secondary school....	54
4.3.3 Subtheme 1.1c: Preparing for transition.....	55
4.3.4 Subtheme 1.1d: Difficulties during transition.....	57
4.3.5 Theme overview and material development.....	59
4.4 Theme 1.2: Adjusting to Secondary School.....	60
4.4.1 Subtheme 1.2a: Secondary school is less worrying than anticipated.....	60
4.4.2 Subtheme 1.2b: Practical lessons.....	61
4.4.3 Subtheme 1.2c: Specialist subjects, teachers and resources.....	62
4.4.4: Subtheme 1.2d: Alternative learning experiences.....	63
4.4.5 Subtheme 1.2e: Ongoing literacy difficulties.....	64
4.4.6 Theme overview and material development.....	65
4.5 Theme 1.3: Disclosing Dyslexia.....	65
4.5.1 Subtheme 1.3a: Dyslexia - confusing and difficult to explain.....	66
4.5.2 Subtheme 1.3b: Teachers should know when a student has dyslexia.....	68
4.5.3 Subtheme 1.3c: Disclosing dyslexia to peers.....	69

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

4.5.4 Theme overview and material development.....	70
4.6 Theme 1.4: Requesting Help and Taking Control.....	71
4.6.1 Subtheme 1.4a: The importance of being able to ask for help.....	71
4.6.2 Subtheme 1.4b: Enabling factors for requesting help.....	72
4.6.3 Subtheme 1.4c: Taking control.....	73
4.6.4 Theme overview and resource development.....	74
4.7 Theme 1.5: Support from Friends and Family.....	75
4.7.1 Subtheme 1.5a: The importance of peer support.....	75
4.7.2 Subtheme 1.5b: Family support.....	77
4.7.3 Subtheme 1.5c: Parents as advocates.....	78
4.7.4 Theme overview and material development.....	79
4.8 Overarching Themes and Subthemes for Phase 2 Data Analysis.....	80
4.9 Theme 2.1: Transition Fact Finder.....	81
4.9.1 Subtheme 2.1a: How it could help.....	81
4.9.2 Subtheme 2.1b: Improvements.....	82
4.9.3 Subtheme 2.1c: Timing.....	84
4.9.4 Theme Overview.....	84
4.10 Theme 2.2: Positive Goals for a Positive Start.....	84
4.10.1 Subtheme 2.2a: How it could help.....	85
4.10.2 Subtheme: 2.2b: Improvements.....	86
4.10.3 Subtheme 2.2c: Timing.....	87
4.10.4 Theme overview.....	88
4.11 Theme 2.3: Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia.....	88
4.11.1 Subtheme 2.3a: How it could help.....	89



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLLEXIA ON TRANSITION

4.11.2 Subtheme 2.3b: Improvements.....	91
4.11.3 Subtheme 2.3c: Timing.....	92
4.11.4 Theme Overview.....	93
4.12 Theme 2.4: How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me.....	93
4.12.1 Subtheme 2.4a: How it Could Help.....	93
4.12.2 Subtheme 2.4b: Improvements.....	94
4.12.3 Subtheme 2.4c: Timing.....	95
4.12.4 Theme overview.....	96
4.13 Theme 2.5: Who can Help with What?.....	96
4.13.1 Subtheme 2.5a: How it could help.....	97
4.13.2 Subtheme 2.5b: Improvements.....	98
4.13.3 Subtheme 2.5c: Timing.....	99
4.13.4 Theme overview.....	100

## **5. Chapter 5: Discussion**

5.1 Overview of the Chapter.....	101
5.2 Discussion of Findings Linked to Research Questions.....	101
5.2.1 How do students with dyslexia experience the transition to secondary school?.....	101
5.2.2 What do students with dyslexia currently find supportive in preparation for and during the transition to secondary school, including their use of self-advocacy?.....	103
5.2.3 How do participants perceive materials which develop self-advocacy in order to support students with dyslexia during the transition to secondary school?.....	105

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

5.3 Limitations of the Research and Guidelines for Future Research.....	107
5.4 Implications of the Findings.....	110
5.5 Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs).....	111
5.6 Dissemination of Findings.....	113
5.7 Self-reflection and Personal Learning.....	114
References.....	116

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## List of Tables

Table 3.1	Participant Information and Inclusion Data.....	35
Table 3.2	Research Procedures and Time Line.....	39

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1	Overview of data collection and analysis procedures.....	37
Figure 4.1	Thematic map illustrating the five overarching themes for phase 1.....	51
Figure 4.2	Thematic map illustrating theme 1.1 and corresponding subthemes.....	51
Figure 4.3	Thematic map illustrating theme 1.2 and corresponding subthemes.....	60
Figure 4.4	Thematic map illustrating theme 1.3 and corresponding subthemes.....	66
Figure 4.5	Thematic map illustrating theme 1.4 and corresponding subthemes.....	71
Figure 4.6	Thematic map illustrating theme 1.5 and corresponding subthemes.....	75
Figure 4.7	Thematic map illustrating the five overarching themes for phase 2.....	81
Figure 4.8	Thematic map illustrating theme 2.1 and corresponding subthemes.....	81
Figure 4.9	Thematic map illustrating theme 2.2 and corresponding subthemes.....	85
Figure 4.10	Thematic map illustrating theme 2.3 and corresponding subthemes.....	89
Figure 4.11	Thematic map illustrating theme 2.4 and corresponding subthemes.....	93
Figure 4.12	Thematic map illustrating theme 2.5 and corresponding subthemes.....	97

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## Appendices

1:	Psychological Theories Underpinning the Reviewed Research.....	126
2:	Table Outlining Systematic Search 1.....	127
3:	Table Outlining Systematic Search 2.....	128
4:	Table Outlining Systematic Search 3.....	129
5:	Details of Key Research Identified for Critical Analysis.....	130
6:	Information for Schools.....	132
7:	Head Teacher Consent Form.....	134
8:	Accessible Information for Participants.....	135
9:	Information for Parents.....	138
10:	Parent Consent Forms.....	140
11:	Participant Consent Form.....	141
12:	Phase 1 Interview Guide.....	143
13:	Phase 2 Interview Guide.....	144
14:	Example of a Coded Transcript.....	145
15:	Thematic Map for Phase 1.....	157
16:	Working Code List Extract.....	158
17:	Photographic Examples of Compiling Themes by Hand.....	161
18:	Working Versions of the Thematic Map.....	162
19:	Thematic Map for Phase 2.....	164
20:	Ethical Approval form the University of East London.....	165
21:	Draft Material 1: Transition Fact Finder.....	166
22:	Draft Material 2: Positive Goals for a Positive Start.....	170
23:	Draft Material 3: Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia.....	178

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

24:	Draft Material 4: How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me...	181
25:	Draft Material 5: Who Can Help With What?.....	188
26:	Final Material 1: Transition Fact Finder.....	194
27:	Final Material 2: Positive Goals for a Positive Start.....	199
28:	Final Material 3: Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia.....	207
29:	Final Material 4: How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me...	211
30:	Final Material 5: Who Can Help With What?.....	221
31:	Participant Overview of Draft Materials.....	227

# THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

## List of Abbreviations

BPS	British Psychological Society
DfE	Department for Education
DH	Department of Health
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
IEP	Individualised Education Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SLS	Support for Learning Service
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UK	United Kingdom

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview of the Chapter**

The aim of the present research was to gain a better understanding of the transition from primary to secondary school for students with dyslexia. It was hoped the types of support that the students themselves felt were important could be established, within a socio-political context which seeks to promote person-centred planning and self-advocacy. This chapter begins by outlining why research in this area is important, and provides both a national and Local Authority context. The research is then outlined in terms of the author's own perspective and how this contributed to its development. Finally, a summary of how the work contributes to the current research knowledge is given.

### **1.2 Defining Dyslexia**

Conceptualising dyslexia has been an area of substantial research and debate within the disciplines of psychology and education (Reid, 2011). The breadth of difficulties associated with dyslexia and decades of debate regarding theories which seek to explain it have led to a vast variety of definitions and terminology in the past (Pumfrey & Reason, 1991). The dyslexia concept is still researched internationally and the identification of individuals affected by dyslexia, and the availability of support, continues to increase (Peer, 2001). In the UK, the area of dyslexia has increasingly been the subject of government investigation and initiatives in the past decade (Reid, 2009). This is due, in part, to a governmental recognition of the significant body of scientific research outlining the various components of dyslexia which indicate special teaching considerations and interventions are required. For example, see the written statement to the House of Commons by Ed Balls (The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

In reviewing a number of definitions posed by dyslexia associations, charities, and government documentation, Reid (2009) established four common points; the recognition that dyslexia is developmental; an understanding that the central characteristics relate to literacy; an appreciation that different and special teaching and learning approaches are necessary; an acknowledgement that there can be additional secondary factors associated with dyslexia. In 2009, Sir Jim Rose was commissioned by the then Secretary of State to write a review of dyslexia. Examining relevant published



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

research and consulting with an expert advisory panel, Rose (2009) set out a working definition of dyslexia. This definition suggests that:

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points...
- ...A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention. (Rose, 2009 p. 30).

This working definition not only forms part of a government sponsored review, but it has been accepted and adopted by major UK dyslexia organisations (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014). However, an alternative argument is that criterion based definitions such as this are unhelpful because they are based on within-child factors, which perpetuates the notion that the child has a ‘problem’ the solving of which is the responsibility of somebody with ‘special training’ (Mackay, 2009). Some authors suggest that dyslexia should be conceptualised as a learning difference, placing the onus on practitioners to adapt their teaching to the learning style of the young person (Mackay, 2006).

Reaching an accepted understanding of dyslexia has been further complicated by literature which queries the efficacy of dyslexia as a concept altogether. Some researchers and professionals question whether there is a particular set of difficulties which can be consistently and rigorously diagnosed as dyslexia, and whether people with this diagnosis are different from other individuals who have difficulties learning to read and spell (Elliott & Gibbs, 2012). Proponents of the ‘dyslexia myth’ argue that dyslexia cannot be distinguished from reading and spelling difficulties due to the lack of an agreed definition, the overlap of difficulties associated with dyslexic and non-dyslexic individuals with reading difficulties, and an assessment procedure which is unscientific (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014). This has led to some reservations about the concept itself and an avoidance of the term ‘dyslexia’ within the educational

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

community, and instead the term ‘specific learning difficulties’ is often opted for (BPS, 1999).

For the purpose of this research, the concept of dyslexia is recognised as a discrete category of Special Educational Needs (SEN), but it is acknowledged that not all researchers and practitioners will accept the proposed difference between dyslexic and non-dyslexic individuals with reading difficulties. In understanding what the dyslexia concept encompasses for individuals, the core and associated difficulties outlined by the Rose review (2009) are accepted. However, in recognition of the need to position dyslexia as a learning preference as opposed to a within-person deficit, it will be considered a specific learning difference, as opposed to difficulty (Mackay, 2006).

### **1.3 The Importance of Research investigating the Transition to Secondary for Dyslexic students**

In the foreword to Peer and Reid’s (2001) book regarding dyslexia in secondary schools, David Blunkett, then Secretary State for Education, notes that “too many of our pupils are disadvantaged when they reach secondary school due to their dyslexia and poor literacy skills generally” (p. v). There is a recognition in the literature that the increased demands put upon students when attending secondary school present a number of challenges for those with dyslexia (Hunter, 2009). This can lead to feelings of failure, causing students to often become demotivated and disengage from learning (Peer & Reid, 2002).

Thomson (2007) argues that the training and expertise of most secondary teachers are specific to their subjects and that many are not aware of the specific needs of students with dyslexia. Therefore, dyslexic students constantly meet barriers to learning across the secondary curriculum and can become discouraged with learning due to their limited initial success (Thomson, 2008). In a report conducted by Driver Youth Trust (2013), it was revealed that 52% of teachers had not received any training on dyslexia, and 74% did not feel their teacher training provided them with adequate skills to identify and teach children with dyslexia. The report also highlighted the lack of specialist training provision available for teachers. Funding to support the ongoing training of specialist teachers is no longer available from the government - despite an overwhelming amount of the teachers surveyed believing it important to receive such training.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

The demands of secondary school have been found to lead to a variety of negative outcomes for students with dyslexia, highlighting the importance of adequate preparation and support. These outcomes include; significantly lower perceived scholastic competence (Frederickson and Jacobs, 2001) poor academic self-esteem (Ott, 1997); feelings of isolation (Burton, 2004); poor internal locus of control (Glazzard, 2010); bullying (Mishna, 2003); and feelings of frustration (Rose, 2009). Qualitative research has also described the significant emotional difficulties which can be experienced during education (Nalavany, Carawan and Rennick, 2011). Furthermore, McNulty (2003) found that a lack of appropriate support for academic difficulties associated with dyslexia can negatively affect individuals for the rest of their lives.

There is also a substantial body of research which highlights the impact of transition from primary to secondary school itself (Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012). There is international data which consistently reveals a 'dip' in achievement and attainment following transfer (West, Sweeting, & Young, 2010). There is also consistent evidence to suggest that students experience a high degree of anxiety and stress in relation to secondary transfer (Zeedyk et al., 2003). Mackay (2009) notes that dyslexic students are particularly susceptible to a 'transition dip' whilst they adjust to the different expectations of secondary school and the unfamiliar approaches of their new teachers. Furthermore, Galton, Gray, and Ruddock (1999) report that students with SEN are particularly vulnerable to the effects associated with transfer, as are students with lower self-esteem (West et al., 2010). As dyslexic students are considered to have SEN and are often associated with low self-esteem, it could be argued that they are particularly vulnerable during transition to secondary school.

Currently there is only limited research which has specifically investigated the primary to secondary transition for students with dyslexia, but the notion that students with dyslexia find transition difficult is supported by research which has focused on dyslexic students moving to post-secondary placements. While this transition is likely to be daunting for most students, it can be particularly stressful for those with dyslexia (Mortimore & Crozier, 2006). When this transition is not planned for appropriately, there is evidence to suggest dyslexic students have difficulties adjusting to the demands of their new learning environment (Hunter, 2009). For example, Mortimore and Crozier (2006) found Higher Education students with dyslexia struggled to adjust to study skill requirements. As such, there is a general consensus in the literature that highlights the importance of professionally managing post-secondary transitions specifically for

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSPLEXIA ON TRANSITION

dyslexic students (Taylor, Duffy, & England, 2009), and that appropriate and timely support can make a big difference to students' success upon entering a new placement (Davies, 2013).

### 1.4 Context of the Research

**1.4.1 National Context:** There is a growing recognition of both the prevalence of dyslexia in schools and the need to support dyslexic individuals appropriately to ensure they achieve their full potential. It has been estimated that there are 1.2 million school aged students with dyslexia (Dyslexia Action, 2009). The most recent National Statistics (2013) compiled by the Department for Education revealed that in state-funded secondary schools, specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia) are the third most frequent type of primary need, accounting for nearly 16 % of all SEN. Dyslexia is now specifically mentioned within the Equality Act (HMSO, 2010) and is currently recognised as a disability, thus it would be unlawful to discriminate against anyone with dyslexia under the terms of this act. The implications of this are that individuals are entitled to reasonable adjustments to overcome these difficulties. Dyslexia is also recognised as a SEN and is mentioned as an example in the recent SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DH, 2014). Therefore, every school is required to meet the SEN of students with dyslexia, including ensuring that they are supported to participate in the activities of the school alongside other students, and to take action to remove barriers to learning through effective special educational provision. Recently, the government has made public statements about the importance of recognising dyslexia. This has included statements from Secretaries of State for Education Kenneth Clarke; David Blunkett; and Ed Balls, and in March 2012, then Education Minister Michael Gove acknowledged that one in ten children have dyslexia (Dyslexia Action, 2013).

A radical reform of educational and health support for children with SEN is taking place in England. This national overhaul has prompted a distinct shift towards ensuring children and young people and their parents are at the centre of any decisions relating to their SEN provision, support, and transitional plans. For example, the opening points in the Children and Families Act Part 3 – Children with SEN (DfE, 2014) states that Local Authorities must have regard for; (a) the views, wishes and feelings of the child and his or her parent, or the young person; (b) the importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, participating as fully as possible in decisions relating to the exercise of the function concerned.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

This ethos is also upheld throughout the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DH, 2014); reference is consistently made to the importance of having the needs of the individual child and young person sit at the heart of any assessment or planning. It advocates a ‘person-centred’ approach in which “local authorities must have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child, child’s parent or young person, their aspirations, the outcomes they wish to seek and the support they need to achieve them” (p.134).

This recent legislation is part of a clear agenda to ensure children/young people are empowered to advocate for themselves in all aspects of their provision and SEN planning. Therefore, in developing this research it has been important to reflect an appreciation for the current socio-political climate. Accordingly, the current research has placed young people at its centre, and their views, suggestions and expertise form the basis of all the outcomes of this research. Furthermore, it has encouraged the use of materials and approaches which promote person-centred planning and self-advocacy.

**1.4.2 Local context:** The Local Authority in which this research was conducted recognises dyslexia as a discrete difficulty. It has a Support for Learning Service (SLS) with a Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Team which offers advice, information, and training to teachers, teaching assistants, and parents to support the inclusion and teaching of students with SpLD, including those with dyslexia. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and SLS have jointly released a dyslexia policy which contains guidance for Local Authority professionals. This seeks to provide a common language and approach to the identification and assessment of dyslexia and to the inclusion of dyslexic students within the borough. The policy accepts the Rose (2009) working definition of dyslexia and states that professionals should use this in their day-to-day work. The policy also outlines that professionals in the EPS or SLS are likely to be the ones to undertake assessments for dyslexia. They also provide courses that allow staff in schools to be trained to carry out this work, advise on other accredited courses and offer advice and support to those already trained.

In September 2014, I met with the SpLD Team and co-head of the SLS in order to discuss the current support offered to schools and young people with dyslexia and how this research could be of most use within the local context. The meeting identified the absence of provision offered to young people to support them through transition to secondary school, although two Specialist Teachers reported supporting individual

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

students in relation to transition. In general, there was recognition that the transition to secondary school posed many challenges for young people with dyslexia in particular. Also, it was felt some local secondary schools struggle to provide appropriate accommodations and support due to not understanding the specific needs of dyslexic students. As such, materials which schools could use to support students with dyslexia to transition to secondary school more effectively could be appropriate and helpful within the local context. Furthermore, materials which promoted self-advocacy skills would be especially useful as secondary schools do not always understand the individual needs of dyslexic students.

### **1.5 Researcher Position**

The development of this research stems from a very personal interest in dyslexia, having been diagnosed as dyslexic myself. I struggled academically through school and college, thus I recognise the frustration young people with dyslexia have every time they pick up a book or try to express themselves in writing. The idea of writing a 35,000 word thesis would have once seemed like an impossibility, but I have been supported to find accommodations which enable me to complete such tasks, including dictation software, mind mapping programs and spellcheckers. In deciding upon a specific research area, I first asked myself what things made a difference to me being able to persevere and achieve academically. I concluded that the most important element was knowing what I needed in order to work effectively, ensuring these resources and strategies were in place and being able to communicate this to my teachers, lecturers and, peers. I became interested in how researchers and practitioners have supported a variety of young people with a variety of difficulties to become self-advocates for their own learning needs. Secondly, I drew on my experience of working with a number of students with dyslexia within my roles as a Learning Mentor and Pastoral Support Assistant, and in my current role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). I noticed that the prospect of transition to secondary school for these students can cause considerable anxiety and worry. Additionally, parents and school staff are often equally concerned due to the fear that they will not be seen as a priority for support at secondary school in comparison to the needs of other children. Thus, I developed the current research to better understand this phenomenon and inform the creation of materials which support dyslexic students to transition to secondary school.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

My aim has been to explore the transition from the perspective of dyslexic students so that any findings would be grounded in their recent experiences. However, having taken a critical realist perspective, I recognise the influence that my position may have on the research, and how this may interact with the views, behaviour, and emotions of the participants (Bhaskar, 1989). For instance, my self-identifying as an individual with dyslexia subsequently means that the research inherits an acceptance of the construct of dyslexia as a discrete set of difficulties. In outlining my position as a researcher, I hope to acknowledge my own accountability within the research, and an awareness of the need to consider this within the interpretation of the findings.

### **1.6 Contribution of the Current Research to Previous Research Knowledge**

This chapter has outlined the need to effectively support dyslexic students to adapt to secondary school in order to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by their learning preferences, at both government level (Rose, 2009; Dyslexia Action, 2013) and research level (Hunter, 2009; Thomson, 2008; Peer and Reid, 2001). A successful transition from primary school is key in students making a successful start at secondary school (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010), yet various factors have been outlined which suggest this transition may be a difficult experience for students with dyslexia and could lead to a number of negative outcomes in terms of attainment well-being, and coping strategies (Zeedyk et al., 2003; Mackay, 2009; Taylor et al., 2009). However, as is outlined in Chapter 2, a systematic literature review has shown that there is very little research which explores the primary to secondary transition specifically for students with dyslexia in the UK. Thus, this research builds on previous literature to offer an insight into how students with dyslexia manage one of the most difficult periods in their educational careers (Zeedyk et al., 2003). Additionally, the findings offer an insight into the approaches and types of support which can be used to better facilitate an effective transition to secondary school, based on the views of students themselves.

Arguably, provisions and interventions created to support students with SEN should reflect the current socio-political context for which they are intended. As noted above, there has been a shift in government policy towards person-centred planning and enabling students to be self-advocates in their support and SEN planning. Currently, there is a growing evidence base for self-advocacy interventions and person-centred techniques for other individuals with SEN, disabilities, and for dyslexic students entering Higher Education (discussed in Chapter 2). However, very little has been

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

established in the literature regarding the effectiveness of such interventions for younger children, for supporting students with transition to secondary school, and specifically for supporting dyslexic students. This research explores the views of students themselves regarding their inclusion within the transition planning process, as well as materials which support them to be self-advocates and potentially better able to contribute to their own success. This has led to a better insight into how these techniques can be most effective for students with dyslexia transitioning to secondary school.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter begins by considering ways in which students with dyslexia can be supported to successfully manage the primary to secondary school transition. This is considered in terms of the recent changes to SEN policy and the shift towards person-centred planning. Self-advocacy is considered as a potential means of ensuring students with dyslexia are maximally involved during transition planning and educational decision making. This chapter then outlines the details of three systematic literature searches which cover the following areas; self-advocacy and transition; dyslexia and transition interventions; dyslexia and self-advocacy. The studies related to each of these areas are then critically evaluated. Finally, implications are drawn from the findings of this critical evaluation, which are used to inform the focus of the current research.

### 2.2 Dyslexia, Transition, and Self-advocacy

**2.2.1 Involving young people in transition planning:** As was outlined in Chapter 1, recent reforms to the educational and health support for students with SEN has resulted in a distinct shift towards ensuring children and young people are at the centre of decisions relating to their provision, support, and transition planning. This has been reflected in national legislation, including the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DH, 2014). The shift towards a person-centred culture promotes students with SEN to advocate for themselves and participate in decision making, such as at person-centred reviews (Sanderson, Mathiesen, & Erwin, 2006). However, research tells us that students with dyslexia often lack the necessary skills in order to become an active participant and express their wants and needs related to their educational future (Arndt, Konrad, & Test, 2006; Schreiner, 2007). Consequently, a range of researchers have argued for young people to be supported to develop self-advocacy skills in order to ensure that they become self-determined and maximally involved in the transition and planning process (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000; Van Reusen, 1998).

**2.2.2 Defining self-advocacy:** Self-advocacy can be defined as a person's ability to effectively articulate, communicate and negotiate their own desires, goals, interests, needs, and rights (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey 2000). Common elements include; understanding one's own disability including strengths and weaknesses;

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

knowledge of individual rights; ability to successfully request accommodations needed; and effective leadership skills (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer & Eddy, 2005). Essentially, self-advocacy for children and young people includes having the right knowledge and self-awareness, as well as the ability to communicate this to others in order to request provisions which lead to a successful educational experience (Pocock, et al., 2002).

Educational research over the last two decades has established that self-advocacy is an important skill for students with SEN to learn in order to be successful, and links have been found between self-advocacy and academic attainment, school completion, and outcomes following post-secondary transition (Roberts, Ju, & Zhang, 2014).

Importantly, Test, Fowler, Brewer, and Wood (2005) have reported evidence that individuals with a variety of SEN and disabilities can learn self-advocacy skills.

### **2.2.3 Promoting young people to self-advocate during transition: Reid**

(2009) argues it is vitally important to teach self-advocacy to students with dyslexia if they are to be fully included in school and in society, as they need to be able to identify their needs, and assert their rights and their goals. In this sense, promoting self-advocacy in students with dyslexia is one means of enabling them to negotiate transition effectively, ensuring they participate in the planning and decision making process, including being able to communicate their difficulties and the support they need to staff and peers at their next school. In her chapter on dyslexia and transition, Hunter (2009) writes extensively about the importance of students being able to take account of the implications of their dyslexia, and having the necessary self-advocacy skills to communicate this to others throughout the transition process. However, although self-advocacy may be an important skill-set to enable students with dyslexia to be actively engaged with person-centred approaches to transition, research has indicated that, unlike their peers, students with SEN (including dyslexia) often do not acquire self-advocacy skills without explicit instruction and opportunities to practice them (Madson-Ankeny & Lehmann, 2011). As a result, researchers have developed and evaluated a range of interventions which have sought to develop self-advocacy in students (Test, et al., 2005a). As this is potentially an effective means of supporting students with dyslexia to be more involved in their transition planning, the efficacy of self-advocacy based transition interventions is considered further during the critical analysis of key research, below (2.6).

### **2.3 Three Areas of Key Research**

To ensure that all relevant literature relating to dyslexia, transition and self-advocacy was considered, three areas of key research were critically analysed. These areas included research investigating (1) the impact of self-advocacy on transition outcomes (including children and young people with and without SEN), (2) the transition outcomes for young people with dyslexia, and (3) self-advocacy and young people with dyslexia. A discussion of the psychological theories underpinning the reviewed research can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **2.4 Systematic Search**

The search engine EBSCO Host was used to complete the systematic searches. The built-in thesaurus function and relevant literature was used to identify any synonyms or related terms for each of the key search terms, for example, American journals tended to use ‘Specific learning disability’ (SLD) rather than dyslexia and thus this was incorporated in the search terms to avoid eliminating these articles. Boolean logic was used to ensure each of the identified terms were included in the search. A full list of the search terms used can be seen in Appendices 2, 3, and 4. EBSCO Host was used to complete each systematic search within the following databases:

- Academic Search Complete
- British Education Index Child Development & Adolescent Studies
- Education Research Complete
- Education Resource Information Centre
- PsycARTICLES
- PsychINFO
- Teacher Reference Centre.

Articles were included that were published in a peer-reviewed journal. A number of doctoral level thesis were also included as they were either particularly relevant to the areas being researched, or covered areas not otherwise researched by peer-reviewed articles.

Studies which were over 20 years old at the time of the search were excluded, as were articles not written in English. Details of the final inclusion and exclusion criteria used and the search results can be seen in Appendices 2, 3 and 4. In total 202 research

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

articles were found. Titles and abstracts were reviewed and from this, ten key research references were identified and included within the in-depth critical analysis below. A number of other articles were found during the systematic searches which, although they did not meet the inclusion criteria for the critical analysis, were relevant to the more general discussion throughout this chapter. A complete list of the ten key references and corresponding details can be found in Appendix 5.

### 2.5 Critical Analysis of Key Research

**2.5.1 The efficacy of self-advocacy and transition:** Having outlined the importance of children developing self-advocacy skills in preparation for school transition, this chapter will now turn to critically analysing research which has examined the efficacy of self-advocacy interventions seeking to support students (with and without SEN) manage school-based transitions.

Merchant and Gajar (1997) conducted a review of the research in order to investigate what self-advocacy components were included in programs aimed at supporting the transition to post-secondary placements for students with learning disabilities. The inclusion of a review of research within this critical analysis was deemed appropriate, as Merchant and Gajar provide a helpful overview of the self-advocacy research base prior to 1997. This USA based review identified seven studies which reported on programs meeting this criterion. The authors found that the areas covered by the programs included (1) understanding one's own disability (strengths and weaknesses); (2) knowledge of individual rights; (3) accommodations needed; (4) effective communication skills. However, not all the programs taught all of these skills. A strength of this research is that the authors investigated the specific components that a number of different self-advocacy interventions included, making clear the areas of learning which would be useful in future interventions.

Although all of the seven programs that were evaluated reported positive outcomes for the students involved, only four of these provided outcomes which were empirically based. Of these four studies, the measures taken to evaluate the program's effectiveness differed between the studies. A common finding was that students who had received a self-advocacy transition programme were more likely to remain enrolled in their post-secondary course. Students were also better able to identify and request accommodations at their post-secondary placement, effectively disclose or explain their

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

disability to staff, and ask for support from a peer or friend. One study revealed that the students who received the self-advocacy intervention achieved significantly higher academic success, after the first semester, while another reported enhanced feelings of independence and self-confidence, following the transition program. While these positive outcomes provide some support for transition programs which teach self-advocacy skills, these findings should be interpreted with caution. A number of the interventions investigated were transition interventions with a self-advocacy component. Therefore, the students in these studies received some support with self-advocacy as part of a more general transition intervention, making it difficult to be sure if any positive outcomes were as a direct result of gains in self-advocacy.

One research study which has attempted to explicitly examine the impact of learning self-advocacy skills on students was conducted by Walker and Test (2011). They attempted to identify effective support for African-American students with learning difficulties who had recently transitioned to post-secondary education. The authors implemented and evaluated the impact of teaching self-advocacy strategies to three students, measuring their ability to successfully request academic accommodations (including resources or enabling arrangements put in place to support academic achievement). These strategies included helping the students become more aware about their learning disability and learning communication skills to support their request for appropriate accommodations.

Walker and Test (2011) found a functional relationship between the intervention and students' ability to demonstrate self-advocacy skills and generalise this to actual meetings with course instructors. Surveys revealed that all students rated the intervention as effective in helping them use advocacy-skills to request accommodations. Additionally, faculty staff rated each student's performance during role-plays pre- and post-intervention, finding the latter to be significantly higher than their baseline performance. This provides additional support for the positive effects of the intervention on students' ability to request and acquire academic accommodations. These findings provide support for the efficacy of using self-advocacy interventions to support student transitions. However, the outcomes being measured in this study were quite specific in that they only examined the students' ability to request accommodations. It would have been interesting to examine whether this intervention increased other self-advocacy skills (such as self-awareness, understanding of one's disability, or knowledge of individual rights) and whether it has any other positive

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

effects on the transition experience of students (such as self-confidence, academic performance, and school dropout rate). While these results are promising, a bigger sample size would be needed before making generalisations regarding the efficacy of self-advocacy interventions on the transition success of other students.

Much of the literature on self-advocacy (including the previous two studies) relates to preparing students for post-secondary placements, and there have been repeated calls for research which focuses on younger students (Lancaster, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2002). One such study was reported by Merlone and Moran (2008) in which they evaluated a ten-week programme administered to a US-based class of 10-11 year old students with learning difficulties. The students were preparing for the transition to middle school, which is the same age at which UK students would be transitioning to secondary school. The transition programme was designed to teach students about special education, specific disabilities and learning styles, coping strategies, and self-advocacy skills. During the final session, students participated in an exit interview with a guidance counsellor in which they reviewed their special education file, including test results, their Individualised Education Plan (IEP), and relevant documentation regarding their response to interventions.

Following the completion of the programme, students were asked to complete an evaluative questionnaire in order to ascertain their views on which parts of the programme they found most helpful and which parts they felt they would remember and use in middle school. 'What is a learning disability', 'famous people with learning disabilities', and 'asking for help' were rated as the top three areas that students felt were most important about the programme, while the students rated 'asking for help', 'organisation', and 'positive behaviours' as the things they were most likely to remember and use. Merlone and Moran (2008) also noted a theme in the comments regarding the importance of receiving positive messages about having a learning disability. Following the intervention, students reported feeling more comfortable with their learning style; feeling they could reframe for themselves derogatory comments made about attending special education classes; feeling more positive about asking questions when confused; and decreased feelings that their disability was likely to limit their opportunities to go to college or pursue the career of their choice. Finally, all but one student felt it would be useful to offer the programme to students the following year.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

The findings of the study are based on self-reports by the students, which has both positive and negative implications for the research. Eliciting views and feedback in this way provides a helpful insight into how the students perceived the programme as useful, and aspects that are important to them as 10-11 year olds with learning difficulties, for example, being able to positively reframe their difficulties and being aware of celebrities with similar needs. In light of being more person-centred, hearing the voice of the child in this way is an important aspect of evaluating any intervention involving children. Melone and Moran (2008) neglect to state how many students were part of the class, thus the views of this sample (all of whom are from one US school) may not reflect the wider population. As the researchers only evaluated the program in this way, no information is offered regarding the efficacy of teaching children of this age self-advocacy skills. Furthermore, no conclusions can be made regarding the retention of self-advocacy skills in children of this age, the impact of learning self-advocacy skills, or whether the students were able to utilise these skills post-transition.

Kotzer and Margalit (2007) recruited secondary school-age participants for their research which examined the effect of an e-self-advocacy intervention on students' self-perceptions of competence following and prior to transition. Kotzer and Margalit used a larger sample from a variety of schools in Israel, and used pre and post standardised measures. The sample of 374 students were in the seventh to ninth grade (12-15 years old) meaning some had recently transitioned to middle school, while others were preparing for their transition to high school. An advantage of this study was that the authors divided participants into the following three groups (matched by age and gender) meaning there were two comparison groups; students with learning difficulties who did not participate in the interventions; and those without learning difficulties. The intervention aimed to develop self-advocacy by teaching the students self-awareness; insights into their abilities, competence and difficulties; and the ability to communicate their difficulties as to acquire appropriate accommodations. The program also provided opportunities for classroom discussions among peers and internet-based discussions between participating students and the counsellors who conducted the course.

The results showed that students with learning disabilities who participated in the e-self-advocacy intervention reported higher levels of competence compared with their peers with learning difficulties who did not participate in the intervention. Interestingly, the gains in competence were far greater for students with learning disabilities in the eighth grade in particular. The researchers argued that this was likely

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

to be due to the fact that compared to seventh grade students (who had recently transitioned to middle school) they had achieved a level of stability and familiarity with the educational setting and were thus emotionally ready to become involved in the intervention. Additionally, they were not experiencing the same level of anxiety reported by the ninth grade students, induced by selecting their educational options in preparation for their transition to high school. These findings have important implications for the development of transition interventions, as it reflects the importance of ensuring they are delivered at an appropriate time in students' education. While the e-self-advocacy intervention did not significantly alter student ratings on hope and loneliness scales, loneliness was found to be a predictor of decreased levels of competence. The students' internet messages supported the notion that social distress contributed to lower competence. An advantage of the methodology employed by Kotzer and Margalit (2007) is that it includes a comparison group which strengthens the argument that it was indeed increased self-advocacy which led to greater perceptions of competence. These findings are more generalisable as a larger sample (from a range of different schools) was used in the study, although caution should be exercised when generalising to populations outside of Israel. A unique finding from this study is that internet-based components can be used in an intervention to develop skills in self-advocacy. While an increased level of competence is a positive outcome, there was still no examination of the implications of this in terms of the students' success at school or how this affected them post-transition. The authors also neglected to provide an insight into how students made use of their self-advocacy skills in order to feel more competent.

The only research that could be found which measured both children's ability to learn self-advocacy skills and the effect this has post-transition was a Doctoral thesis by Versnel (2006). This research examined the effectiveness of a transition preparation programme which sought to enhance self-advocacy and the self-regulation of transition skills, including, knowledge, behaviours, and participation in academic decision making. Versnel completed an exploratory, mixed methods case study. Her sample included one Canadian sixth grade class of 22 (11 to 12 years old) and their parents. The programme involved a one-off student/parent workshop followed by students participating in weekly sessions which involved them learning a self-advocacy strategy. Students and parents then attended a genuine transition planning meeting with a member of staff from their junior high school where students were expected to



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

demonstrate an ability to self-advocate. Follow-up interviews with the students were conducted six to ten months after their transition.

Versnel (2006) found that changes in scores on the learning measures indicated that participants successfully learned the self-advocacy strategy following involvement in the programme. An advantage of the methodology used in this study was that the participants were split into two groups, with the second receiving a delayed implementation of the intervention. This made it possible to compare the groups and confidently attribute improvements to the interventions and not maturation alone. Students were able to demonstrate the self-advocacy skills they had learned during an authentic planning meeting with staff from the school they were due to attend. They also appeared to retain this knowledge following their transition to junior high, with the majority of students able to demonstrate declarative and procedural knowledge of the self-advocacy strategy six to ten months later. Both quantitative and qualitative measures indicated that parents felt their children had learned and demonstrated self-advocacy skills following the programme. However, Versnel also reported insignificant findings for changes on a number of pre and post-intervention measures, including motivational beliefs, although it was thought this could be due to a lack of power as a result of the small sample size. Following a thematic analysis of the data obtained through semi-structured interviews, a number of recurrent themes were identified including feeling more prepared for the transition; approaching teachers for extra help; using the strategies to resolve conflicts with peers; identifying new goals; becoming more independent; increased perceptions of belonging and becoming involved in school community; improved academic performance.

A particular strength of this study is the robust methodology it uses. Versnel (2006) not only examined the effectiveness of the self-advocacy strategy during and immediately following the intervention, but this is the only research to examine the efficacy of self-advocacy following the transition to another school. These findings are of particular interest as both quantitative and qualitative data indicated the students retained and utilised these skills for a variety of transition related issues. The students themselves also revealed a number of positive themes regarding being able to self-advocate. Additionally, as the Canadian students in this study are a very similar age to those making the transition to secondary school in the UK, these views are particularly relevant. All the students in the Versnel study, however, were transferring to the same school, and by contrast UK students may find the transition experience more difficult as

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

their transition to different schools could make them feel more isolated. Versnel also noted that some students found learning involved in the intervention cognitively demanding, finding it difficult to keep up with the instructional elements. In developing an intervention for students with dyslexia, it will be important to ensure the intervention is developed in such a way as to make it accessible.

**2.5.2 Dyslexia and transition:** As was established in Chapter 1, research has acknowledged that there are a number of factors that are likely to make school transition more difficult to manage for dyslexic students (Hunter, 2009; Peer and Reid, 2002; Thomson, 2009). However, little research has sought to empirically examine this phenomenon or evaluate interventions which seek to support students to manage transition more effectively. Through the second systematic search, three key references were found relating to dyslexia and transition intervention. This literature review now turns to critically analyse this research.

The only research found which investigated the transition experience of young people in the UK with dyslexia was a Doctoral thesis conducted by Stevens (2012). Stevens interviewed seven 11-12 year olds who had recently transitioned to mainstream secondary schools and had been given a formal diagnosis of dyslexia by an Educational Psychologist (EP). Students' parents were also interviewed separately. Using interpretive phenomenological analysis, the data were analysed to better understand the experience of primary to secondary school transition for dyslexic students and their parents.

For the students, the analysis generated a total of 11 themes which were then grouped into 3 super-ordinate themes. The first super-ordinate theme, 'growing up', demonstrated children's experience of change in several areas when they moved to secondary school, including internal feelings around growing up and increasing in confidence, but also external pressures including being encouraged to be more independent and responsible for themselves, with the expectation of having control over their relationships and education. Parents also discussed their need to 'step back' and recognise that their child was growing up and needed to take on new responsibilities.

The second super-ordinate theme was the 'impact of being dyslexic'. Students discussed the concept of dyslexia and its meaning for them as well as teacher perceptions. An important sub-theme was how in the past, teachers were already aware

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

of their difficulties, but they felt as though their new teachers were not aware of their potential difficulties. While some were able to describe developing a positive relationship with teachers enabling them to ask for help when they needed to, other participants provided examples of times when their difficulties had an impact and that they were unable to make teachers understand this. Another sub-theme was changing attitudes towards their dyslexia label and only disclosing it at certain times.

In the final super-ordinate theme, 'achieving academically' participants expressed wanting to be in a high set so that they were with people of a similar ability. Participants expressed concerns about not achieving in certain areas and struggling with these lessons, often in relation to their experience of dyslexia. However, the participants who were able to acknowledge subjects that they could perform well in discussed improved overall levels of confidence and belief in themselves. Parents acknowledged the importance of emphasising the strengths of their child and how this helped them to develop further belief in themselves and compensate for difficulties with reading and writing.

Stevens' (2012) research offers a unique insight into the experience of primary to secondary transition for seven students with dyslexia. The rich data collected in this research provides a detailed insight into the areas these students found difficult and the types of support which may be of use to dyslexic students making this transition in the future. A number of the issues raised by participants (including becoming more independent, disclosing dyslexia and academic difficulties, and identifying areas of strength) relate to the types of skills that self-advocacy interventions seek to develop in young people. In this sense, it could be argued that there is a need for research which seeks to ascertain the views of young people with dyslexia regarding the efficacy of self-advocacy skills during the transition to secondary school. However, it should be noted that the phenomenological methodology used and small sample size means that any generalisations made are limited, and further research on this area should be undertaken before drawing any firm conclusions.

One intervention which has been developed to support students with dyslexia manage the transition to secondary school was evaluated by Firth, Frydenberg, Steeg, and Bond (2013). The authors used a resilience-based coping programme in two Australian schools. The programme was used with 101 year six participants (10-11 years old), 23 of whom had dyslexia. All students received the 11 week intervention but

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

the participants with dyslexia received an additional 10 withdrawal sessions which focused all the coping strategies onto dyslexia-related situations. This included role-modelling from successful adults who have dyslexia, taught awareness of coping approaches to having dyslexia, as well as goal-orientated discussions of dyslexia-related issues in a supportive group. Although it was not possible to use a control group throughout the study, after the intervention and during the follow-up year, a grant enabled the recruitment of a contrast group of 39 participants, 10 of whom had dyslexia.

Baseline comparisons between students who had dyslexia and those who did not indicated no significant difference in areas including perceived control, coping, well-being and school connection. This was an interesting finding as previous research has repeatedly shown differences at the secondary school level, with dyslexic students having more external locus of control and less adaptive coping (Firth et al., 2013 cite Firth, Frydenberg, & Greaves, 2008; Lackaye, Margalit, Ziv & Ziman, 2006). The authors suggest it is possible that students who have dyslexia do not develop maladaptive coping strategies and difficulties in these areas until they reach the more challenging environment of secondary school. In this respect, creating an intervention which targets dyslexic students before secondary school may be central to preventing negative outcomes and maladaptive coping mechanisms. This notion is supported by data taken at a follow-up once the students had made the transition to secondary school; students with dyslexia who received the intervention had similar levels of school connectedness and happiness to those who did not have dyslexia, and they had higher well-being than the students in the contrast group who had dyslexia but who had not received the intervention. Furthermore, results also indicated a reduction in non-productive coping strategies for all students including those with dyslexia who received the intervention, with these students achieving greater reductions and more internal locus of control. Again, this is contradictory to previous research examining dyslexic students at the secondary level.

This is an important piece of research as it is the only study which has measured the impact of an intervention for dyslexic students transitioning to secondary school. Crucially, the findings indicate the potential importance of pre-transition intervention in preventing negative outcomes. While the students involved are Australian, the definition given for dyslexia is very similar to the UK definition, meaning generalisations can be made to some degree, although it would be important to see if pre-transition interventions have a similar effect with a UK sample. A positive aspect of

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

this study is that the authors collected data at three points, including baseline, post intervention and at a one year follow up, meaning any positive outcomes could be checked for retention a year later. However, a larger sample and a control group identified at baseline (rather than a contrast group in the follow-up year) would have allowed an ongoing comparison throughout the research rather than only at the follow-up stage. It may also have indicated at what point participants in the control group with dyslexia began to develop unhelpful coping strategies, thus strengthening the outcome of this research.

A second study which evaluated an intervention aiming to prepare students with dyslexia for transition was undertaken by Andrus (2010). She used an older sample of US students (14-16 years old) with SLD including dyslexia who were preparing for their transition to post-secondary placements. The course was designed to develop students' self-determination and attainment of transition goals. Significantly, a proportion of the intervention incorporated skills which are related to self-advocacy, such as disability awareness, disability law, and leadership skills. This qualitative research utilised multiple case study or 'collective case study' research methodology in order to gain students' perspectives. Four sources of data were collected including semi-structured interviews; field notes; a review of research papers completed during the intervention that required that students identify and research their disability; participants' reflective journals.

After a process of triangulation, four themes and multiple sub-themes emerged from the data. In the first theme, 'self-determination and external influences', participants revealed that their ability to be self-determined was often influenced by how involved they felt in transition decision making process. Family and peer support was also a common influence. Andrus concluded that students with SLD most readily engage in transition planning and the acquisition of self-determination strategies when the process is student-centred and provided alongside a support network.

The second theme related to 'disability-awareness' and students coming to understand what it meant in practical terms to have SLD. This was often described in terms of having strengths and weaknesses, and how it was important to understand ways of learning which worked for them as individuals. Understanding one's own difficulties is an essential part of self-advocacy, and it would appear this is something on which the students in this study placed much value.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

The third theme to be identified was the importance of self-advocacy skills. The majority of participants reported learning self-advocacy skills and being able to utilise these as a form of self-regulatory behaviour. For example, a number of students reported transferring these skills into their classes by requesting accommodations as identified in their own IEPs. Students also talked about knowing what they needed during classes, assessments or tests in order to succeed. They described how they could achieve this by helping others better understand their difficulty in order to ensure they are provided with the correct support. There was a general consensus that understanding their disabilities resulted in increased comfort in asking teachers for appropriate accommodations. It appears that the students with SLD in this study found learning self-advocacy skills contributed to their success in school, prepared them for post-secondary settings and empowered them to effectively communicate their needs to others.

The final theme was 'autonomy', with the majority of participants describing how they had learnt to take individual control over the process of transition planning and the outcome as it relates to their disability, as well as how they engage in decision making. Arguably, this newly acquired sense of autonomy was achieved following the acquisition of self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, as Andrus (2010) notes that students reported feelings of empowerment simultaneously as they began to better understand their individual disability and engage in self-advocacy.

A strength of this research is that it empowered participants to give their experiences of receiving an intervention which sought to prepare them for transition. In this respect, a more genuine understanding has been gained regarding what students with SLD felt was most important about such an intervention, and subsequently what is likely to be supportive for other students with dyslexia. However, as data was only collected pre-transition, this research does not explore the helpfulness of the intervention on the actual transition experiences of participants. While the majority of participants in this research were students with dyslexia, the inclusion criteria of SLD meant that a small number of the participants had other difficulties, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and specific language difficulties. While the difficulties these students face in terms of transition may be similar to those with dyslexia, it cannot be assumed their experiences are completely the same, thus generalising the findings of this study with students with dyslexia must be done with caution. Additionally, the researcher in this study was commissioned by the school and local education authority

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

to create this program in order to improve transition outcomes. As such, there is potential for research bias as there is a vested interest in the success of the intervention.

**2.5.3 Dyslexia and self-advocacy:** While a number of authors have written about the need for students with dyslexia to develop self-advocacy skills (Hunter, 2009; Reid, 2009), very little research has specifically investigated self-advocacy and dyslexia. The third systematic search only identified two pieces of research in this area, both of which will now be critically analysed.

Schreifels (2013) aimed to investigate how young adults with SLD used self-advocacy skills throughout their post-secondary transition. Using qualitative phenomenological methodology, she interviewed five participants from one school-district in the USA. The students had graduated from high school within the past five years, and Schreifels aimed to determine how the use or lack of self-advocacy skills had affected their lives as young adults.

Following interpretation of the data, Schreifels found that all participants had received some form of self-advocacy training in high school. Two stated that their training was not a specific curriculum, but rather tasks given to them by their IEP case managers. Information from the interviews revealed that the participants were all able to advocate for themselves in a variety of day-to-day situations. One common theme noted by the participants in this study was that practicing the use of self-advocacy skills during high school made it easier for the participants to ask for accommodations from their postsecondary instructors. Another finding was that all participants expressed an understanding of the importance of disclosing their SLD to postsecondary teachers and employers. Participants also reported applying self-advocacy skills to other areas of their lives, such as in their work places when asking for assistance from a supervisor or co-worker, and when negotiating changes to their working arrangements. Overall, the majority of participants felt that the use of the self-advocacy skills they learnt in high school was met with positive results.

These findings are important for the current research as this was the only research which specifically aimed to explore dyslexic students' view on how self-advocacy had impacted on their lives. The participants in this study clearly felt positive about acquiring these skills, and were able to demonstrate using it regularly and in a variety of situations. While it is hard to generalise findings from phenomenological

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

research such as this, it does demonstrate the importance of further investigating the impact of self-advocacy for students with dyslexia. One methodological issue with the study which must be considered is the way in which participants were recruited. Local graduates with SLD were written to and invited to be interviewed regarding their use of self-advocacy skills. Arguably, students who understand and engage in self-advocacy behaviours would be more likely to agree to participate than students who have little understanding or opportunity to practice self-advocacy. This brings into question how representative the views expressed in this research are of other students with dyslexia.

Durlak, Rose, and Bursuck (1994) presented the only research which examined whether students with SLD were able to learn and retain self-advocacy in preparation for post-secondary transition. The authors administered a training programme to eight participants (aged 15-17) in the USA which aimed to teach them a range of transition related and self-advocacy skills. A list of seven self-awareness and self-advocacy skills necessary for success in post-secondary education was compiled, and point values were assigned to each. Point values were awarded to participants following the demonstration of these skills. Point scores were taken prior to the programme via role-play (baseline), one week following the training of a skill, taken in quiz format (maintenance check), and following the completion of the programme during genuine high school meetings with school staff (generalisation). Pre and post-intervention measures were also taken including an assertiveness scale, self-concept scale, and two informal teacher rating scales in order to assess elements of self-awareness and self-advocacy taught in the intervention.

The results indicated that all eight students acquired the self-advocacy and transition skills as a result of the direct instruction provided. On average, participants responded correctly for 42% of the self-advocacy skills over all seven tasks during baseline. This was compared to 82% following the intervention. One week after the training, all participants completed the maintenance check at a 100% performance rate. Participants then completed five generalisation tasks and the average number of these completed successfully by students was 4.38 out of the possible 5.0. However, none of the informal or formal measures completed by students and staff were found to be statistically significant.

The findings outlined by Durlak et al. (1994) are important as they demonstrate that students with SLD can acquire, maintain, and generalise self-advocacy and self-



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

awareness skills through an instructional programme which offers feedback and opportunities for practice. This implies that there is potentially a degree of efficacy in developing similar self-advocacy interventions for younger students with dyslexia. However, there was a discrepancy between the ability of participants to acquire self-advocacy and self-awareness skills and the teacher ratings of their ability to demonstrate these skills. The researchers fail to adequately explain this discrepancy and perhaps obtaining students' self-perceptions of their ability to demonstrate these skills would have established whether these skills had actually been learned. In addition, longitudinal research which measured the retention of these skills post-transition would be needed before claims could be made regarding the usefulness for transition.

### **2.6 Conclusions, Implications and the Development of Research Questions**

In order to critically analyse the research relating to dyslexia, transition and self-advocacy, three systematic literature searches were conducted. The implications of this are now discussed in relation to the aims of the current research and the development of research questions which address and explore these issues.

Overall, very little research has explored the impact of transition for students with dyslexia. Andrus (2010) provided some qualitative findings based on the experiences of dyslexic participants preparing for post-secondary transition. This offered some insight into what students of this age group found supportive. Firth et al. (2013) reported on the efficacy of a pre-transition intervention for Australian students with dyslexia. It was found that transition support such as this may prevent the onset of maladaptive coping and protect against a number of factors which could lead to academic failure. The only research which explored the experiences of UK students with dyslexia on the transition to secondary school was outlined by Stevens (2012). The participants identified a number of issues related to dyslexia and transition, many of which had implications for the current research, as it was argued that some of these could potentially be addressed by an intervention which taught self-advocacy skills. Given the lack of relevant research, only tentative conclusions can be made about dyslexia and transition, highlighting the need for further exploration of the experiences of these students. In light of this, the first research question was developed, and asks:

**How do students with dyslexia experience the transition to secondary school?**

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

The critical analysis of research also revealed that very little is known about what students with dyslexia currently find supportive during transition to secondary school. While Stevens (2012) offered some insight into this phenomenon in general, this research did not explicitly explore what students found supportive in preparation for or during their transition to secondary school. Firth et al. (2013) found some evidence to suggest that a resilience-based intervention (which teaches dyslexia-related coping skills) may support students with dyslexia to make a more successful transition to secondary school. However, as this research was based in Australia, further investigation in the UK is needed before generalisations can be made. Andrus (2010) reported findings which provided some insight into what students with dyslexia preparing for post-secondary transition described as supportive. This included being involved in transition planning; family and peer support; disability-awareness. Participants also reported that learning self-advocacy skills helped them prepare and feel more ready for transition. However, as data is only based on pre-transition experiences, it is not clear what students with dyslexia actually found helpful once they transferred to their new placement. To build on this research and further explore what has been supportive for students with dyslexia who have transitioned to secondary school, the second research question was developed and asks:

**What do students with dyslexia currently find supportive in preparation for and during the transition to secondary school, including their use of self-advocacy?**

In considering types of support which have helped other groups of students, the critical analysis of research revealed that there is a modest evidence base for transition interventions which seek to develop self-advocacy in young people with and without SEN. In general, self-advocacy interventions tended to provide instructional sessions related to understanding one's own disability, learning about strengths and weaknesses, effectively communicating the implications of their SEN to others, and knowledge of individual rights (Merchant & Gajar, 1997). A number of the studies successfully demonstrated that students with a variety of needs were able to learn and retain the self-advocacy strategies being taught, and generalise these skills to real world situations (Walker & Test, 2011; Kotzer & Margalit, 2007; Versnel, 2006). The development of self-advocacy skills was also shown to increase perceived competence in the lead up to transition (Kotzer & Margalit, 2007). Unfortunately, only Versnel (2006) used longitudinal methodology and measured the retention and impact of self-advocacy skills post transition. Participants generally responded positively to interventions and felt they

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

would be helpful for students preparing for the transition to secondary school (Merlone & Moran, 2008).

With this in mind, the final systematic search considered research in which dyslexia and self-advocacy have been investigated. Only two studies were found in this area, but both strongly indicate the importance of these skills for students with these kinds of difficulties. Durlak et al. (1994) found that dyslexic students were able to learn and generalise self-advocacy skills following an instructional programme. This strengthens the argument that self-advocacy could be an effective approach to ensure students are supported to have a successful transition experience and are maximally involved in decisions about their education and support. Furthermore, Schreifels (2013) found that young adults with dyslexia described self-advocacy skills as having had a positive impact both within school and during post-secondary placements or employment. However, as the participants in both these studies were older than students preparing for transition to secondary school, there is a need to explore the views of younger children with dyslexia in relation to self-advocacy.

Overall, the research outlined within these critical analyses suggests that developing self-advocacy skills in young people with dyslexia could be an effective means of supporting them to make a successful transition to secondary school. Although research relating to dyslexia and self-advocacy is limited, preliminary findings suggest that dyslexic students speak positively about acquiring self-advocacy skills and using them during and following transition. However, as no research has explored the views of dyslexic students on the usefulness of self-advocacy upon transition to secondary school, an aim of the current research is to explore this further. Therefore, the third and final research question asks:

**How do participants perceive materials which develop self-advocacy in order to support students with dyslexia during the transition to secondary school?**

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter presents the conceptual framework of this research, stating the ontological and epistemological position. It then details the purpose of the research and design used, and then outlines the procedures for data collection and methods of analysis. Finally, a discussion is presented which considers validity and trustworthiness, as well as the ethical considerations which were accounted for in this research.

### **3.2 Conceptual Framework**

When completing research, the methodology can be thought of as a means to meeting the research aim. However, it is important to be clear about its objectives and have a sense of what kind of things it is possible to find out (Willig, 2008). Crotty (1998) suggests that researchers ask: what theoretical perspective or ontological position lies behind the methodology in question? That is, the researcher's overarching philosophical views about the nature of existence and reality (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, Crotty suggests researchers consider: what epistemology informs this theoretical perspective? Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge, and considers how and what we can know (Willig, 2008). In this sense, methodological decision-making is guided by the overarching conceptual framework, and should not be separate from questions of ontology and epistemology (Moore, 2005). Therefore, the conceptual framework will now be outlined in order to provide a rationale for the methodology used.

**3.2.1 Ontology:** Considered as the 'traditional scientific approach' (Robson, 2002) positivism suggests that there is a straightforward relationship between the world and how it is perceived and understood. This is to say that it is possible to describe objects, events, and phenomena and to get it right (Willig, 2008). Because positivists consider the world to determine itself, they assume that there is only one correct view that can be taken of it, regardless of the contextual circumstances (Kirk & Miller, 1986). At the other end of the continuum, relativism takes a contrasting philosophical and social scientific position, in that it discards the notion that the world is objective, and argues instead for a reality as constructed through the eyes of the participant (Kelly, 2008). In its most extreme form, relativism advocates that there is no external reality independent of human consciousness and that the world is made up of different sets of

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

meanings attached by individuals (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, these meanings are influenced by the individual's culture, context and historical background, and thus there cannot be one objective reality.

This research sought to better understand the transition to secondary school for students with dyslexia and gather information regarding what these students find supportive during this experience. In this sense, the research leaned towards the positivist position that there is one reality for 'transition to secondary school for students with dyslexia' that could be supported by a particular set of materials or approaches. However, the aim was to better understand this phenomenon through the experiences and perspectives of individuals, meaning the research was open to the notion that the culture, context and background of individuals were likely to have shaped this reality. In this sense, the research also accepted the relativist position that individuals shape their own reality. In light of this conflict it was necessary to consider a third ontological position, critical realism, which offers a middle ground in which aspects of both positivism and relativism are accepted in order to understand the complexities of the social world (Sayer, 2000).

As in positivism, critical realists believe the world is underpinned by a combination of laws, but like relativists, they accept that these can be influenced by context and culture (Robson, 2002). Critical realists believe that there is an external reality, but that the world is complex and stratified and that individuals view this world differently depending on the society or cultural group to which they belong (Robson, 2002). Social research can be complicated by the complex nature of these environments, and thus one important aspect of critical realism is that it accepts that there is always a context which affects reality (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007). Taking this perspective allowed the current research to investigate the reality of 'transition to secondary school for students with dyslexia' while accepting that this is slightly different for each individual, depending on contextual factors (including students' own realities regarding dyslexia). In this respect, critical realist research can have the potential to empower those involved, as it takes the perspective of participants within their social world in order to promote positive change (Robson, 2002; McAlister, 2012). A key aim of this research was to build on the experiences and views of participants regarding what they believed to be supportive during their transition to secondary school. With these factors in mind, it was felt the aims of this research were fundamentally aligned with the ontology of critical realism.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

**3.2.2 Epistemology:** Epistemology is informed or guided by the ontological position of the research (Bryman, 2001). Critical realism sees knowledge as a social and historical product that can be specific to a particular time, culture or situation (Robson, 2002). Its key feature is the focus it has on looking at the world in terms of underlying mechanisms and how these create events in the world (Mathews, 2003). In this sense, Matthews argues the aim of research moves away from predicting which event causes another and towards discovering what mechanisms are enabling an event to happen for some people in a particular social context. In this way, critical realist epistemology suggests that knowledge relates to theory development about underlying mechanisms (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). One aim of the current research was to understand the experiences of students with dyslexia, who have already made the transition to secondary school, in order to identify the common mechanisms which were supportive within this particular social context. In this sense, the type of knowledge being sought fits with critical realist epistemology, as the researcher accepts that there are patterns in the social world which can be identified as a means of developing theory about what works for whom, in which circumstances and how (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). Finally, critical realism is an attractive choice for social research such as this, as through the examination of causal mechanisms it combines a scientific way of thinking, whilst incorporating the impact of context and culture (Fox et al., 2007). Striking a balance between the consideration for social contexts and findings which are generalisable is essential, especially considering the growing need for EPs to justify their profession through establishing an evidence base (Fox, 2002).

### 3.3 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of transition to secondary school for students with dyslexia. It was hoped the participants would identify aspects of their transition experience which enabled them to be successful, as well as areas they found difficult. A second purpose of the research was to understand the extent to which students with dyslexia value the ability to self-advocate and to explore with them whether greater opportunities to learn and use self-advocacy skills would have supported their transition. As only limited information is known about these areas of interest, explorative research was undertaken (Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2001). Taking an exploratory approach enabled the researcher to make sense of a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the situation under study (Mertens, 2010).

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Robson (2002) notes that, in conducting exploratory research a number of things should be accomplished. Firstly, the research should find out what is currently happening in the area of interest, seeking new insights. This was achieved by gaining the views of year seven and year eight students with dyslexia who had recently transitioned to secondary school. This enabled a better understanding of their experiences during this process, any difficulties they faced and their current self-advocacy behaviours. Robson also suggests that exploratory research should assess the phenomena in a new light. To the knowledge of the researcher, no previous research has considered the experiences of students with dyslexia during the transition to secondary school and the role self-advocacy could have within this process. Finally, Robson proposes that exploratory research should generate ideas and hypotheses for the future. Working within the critical realist paradigm, this research seeks to identify mechanisms which currently support students to make a successful transition to secondary school, as well as to develop an understanding of the use of self-advocacy within the transition process. This information has been sought in order to inform future practice and contribute towards the development of self-advocacy based transition materials.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The researcher's overarching philosophical views about the nature of reality and theory of knowledge fundamentally influenced this research design (Moore, 2005). As previously stated, the current research has adopted a critical realist conceptual framework, meaning the researcher accepts that there is an external reality, but that the world is complex and stratified, and that knowledge is a social phenomenon, specific to a particular time, culture or situation (Robson, 2002). As such, critical realists accept that research methods can only produce an understanding of reality within the particular context, thus any research design, whether it is quantitative or qualitative is no more or less legitimate than any other. The intended outcome of research for critical realists is to discover one or more potential mechanisms which are capable of offering an explanation of the phenomenon (Robson, 2002). In this sense, critical realist research is not necessarily bound to research designs which seek to observe the measurable and constant (as in positivist research) but allow the researcher to investigate social phenomena using the most appropriate method to understand the issues (Dankermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlson, 2002).

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

The second aspect considered when selecting a research design was ensuring that it was appropriate for the research questions that were being asked (Manstead & Semin, 1988). The first and second research questions relate to the experiences of students with dyslexia. The former seeks to discover their experience of the transition to secondary school, while the latter explores what has already been supportive during this experience including their current use of self-advocacy. Willig (2008) suggests that qualitative methodology should be used when the researcher wants to gain a rich understanding of a participant's experience of particular conditions. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring social constructs, language and beliefs. It involves an interpretive approach to the subject being studied and examines it within the natural environment, making sense of phenomena in terms of the meaning different people ascribe to it (Mertens, 2010). In this sense, as the third research question seeks to understand participant views on a particular issue, it can also be appropriately addressed through a qualitative design.

The current research has an exploratory purpose as little is known about the phenomenon in question. Creswell (2003) argues that when a phenomenon needs to be better understood because little research has been conducted, a qualitative approach should be taken and that it may be needed when the topic has never been addressed with a certain group of people. This research is the first to examine the transition to secondary school for students with dyslexia and the potential value of them using self-advocacy techniques. Arguably, it would be inappropriate to simply implement and evaluate an existing intervention with this group of students, using quantitative methods. Instead the aim of the current research (and qualitative research generally) was to explore the views of those who have recently experienced this phenomenon to understand the experience more fully (Creswell, 2003). This approach fits the aim of critical realist research which was to identify mechanisms that are supportive for students with dyslexia during the transition to secondary school. Using a qualitative design also empowered participants to have a voice regarding their experience and the types of support they feel students with dyslexia may need.



### **3.5 Research Participants and Recruitment Procedure**

A number of sampling criteria were established to ensure that participants with experiences relevant to the research aims were selected. Firstly, participants were selected on the basis that they were currently attending a mainstream secondary school within the inner-London Borough in which the researcher was working as a TEP. As the research aimed to better understand the transition from primary to secondary school, it was felt students who had more recently made this transition should be included, as they would be better able to remember this experience. As such, only students in years seven and eight were included; year seven students because they had most recently experienced the phenomenon being explored and year eight students because they could provide data on the longer term effects of transition.

Another selection criterion was that they had received a formal diagnosis of dyslexia. Within the Local Authority, a child or young person can be given a diagnosis of dyslexia by a Local Authority EP or through an assessment with the Authority's Support for Learning Service. Alternatively, parents may choose to have their child assessed for dyslexia by a qualified professional working privately. Therefore, only students with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia following an assessment with one such professional were included within the research, with the exception of one participant. Mike had not actually received a formal diagnosis of dyslexia. He had been assessed as being 'at risk' of dyslexia at primary school and had been placed on the SEN register for dyslexia at secondary school. Having explored Mike's needs with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and his mother during a telephone conversation, it was felt his experience was similar enough to students with a formal diagnosis that he should be included within the research.

Additional factors were also considered which might have affected participants' experiences of transition and thus acted as exclusion criteria. Students who had not transitioned from a mainstream UK primary school were excluded from the research as their experience of starting secondary school might have been different to the typical primary to secondary transfer. Secondly, students with a dual diagnosis of dyslexia with another learning difficulty were also excluded from participation as it would be unclear whether their experience of transition were associated specifically with dyslexia, or something else.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, that is they were selected based on the specific needs of the research (Robson, 2002). The researcher contacted colleagues within the service who were link EPs for a secondary school in order to request contact information for each school's SENCo. All 14 mainstream secondary schools within the Local Authority were contacted by telephone and/or email to ascertain whether they had at least one student who met the participant criteria. Eligible schools were sent a formal letter which detailed the exact nature of the research and what was required of them (Appendix 6), and an informed consent form to be signed by the Head Teacher (Appendix 7). Schools were then sent an adapted information sheet which outlined the research for students in an accessible way (Appendix 8). The SENCo (or another nominated member of school staff) was asked to use this information to explain the nature of the research to potential participants, and provisionally ensure they were interested in participating. Following this, letters detailing the research for parents (Appendix 9) and parental consent forms (Appendix 10) were sent to the school for them to distribute accordingly. Some schools chose to post these letters to parents, while others gave them directly to potential participants to take home. Letters included a stamped addressed envelope in order to return the consent form to the researcher at the EPS. However, parents were also able return consent forms via the school SENCo who for forwarding to the researcher. The researcher made himself contactable to parents by telephone should they have wished to discuss any aspect of the research. The researcher then met with all potential participants whose parents had returned an informed consent form for an informal chat regarding the research requirements and any queries they may have. At this point, each SENCo showed the researcher documentation which confirmed each participant met the research criteria, for example an EP report. Participants who still wished to take part were taken through the adapted information sheet (Appendix 8) once more and asked to complete an accessible informed consent form (Appendix 11).

A total of nine participants were recruited from five secondary schools. Table 4.1 provides an overview of participant details and inclusion data. All participants have been given a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Table 3.1

### *Participant Information and Inclusion Data*

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Year Group</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Dyslexia Diagnosis</u>
<b>Walter</b>	8	Male	Support for Learning Service
<b>Jesse</b>	8	Male	Local Authority EP
<b>Hank</b>	8	Male	Local Authority EP
<b>Saul</b>	7	Male	Private Practitioner
<b>Skyler</b>	8	Female	Local Authority EP
<b>Mike</b>	8	Male	Assessed as 'At Risk' of dyslexia
<b>Gus</b>	7	Male	Local Authority EP
<b>Marie</b>	7	Female	Local Authority EP
<b>Holly</b>	8	Female	Support for Learning Service

It should be noted that the Local Authority does not have a single definitive list of all the students assessed as having dyslexia. This, plus the nature of the recruitment process (where the researcher relied on the secondary school SENCoS to initially contact students) makes it impossible to estimate the total number of students in year seven and eight in the Local Authority assessed as having dyslexia.

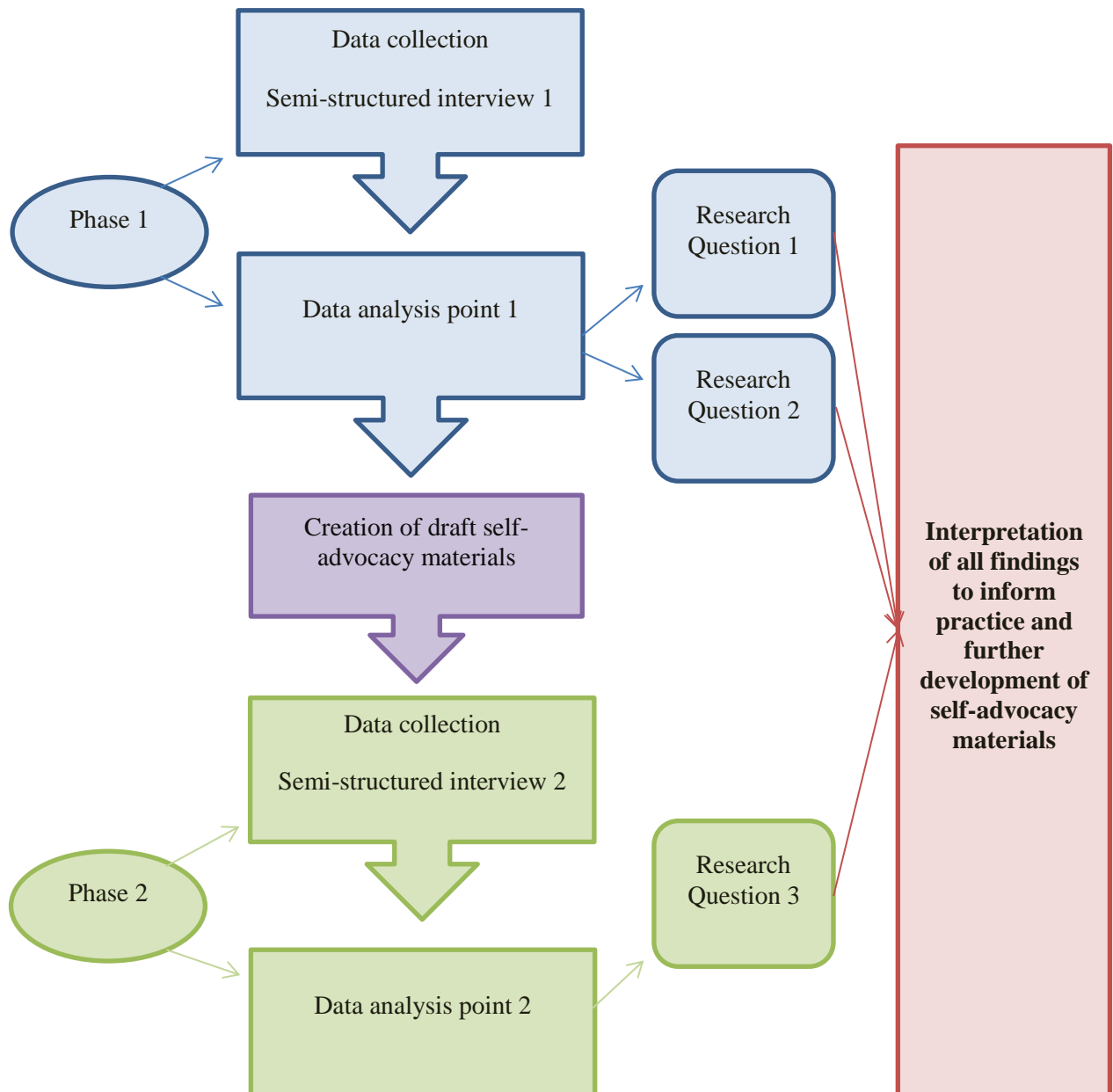
### **3.6 Procedure**

Following the recruitment procedures (detailed in the previous section), there were two phases of data collection and data analysis, as is shown in Figure 3.1. The researcher contacted each SENCo in order to arrange to meet with participants at a time that was convenient.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Figure 3.1

*Overview of data collection and analysis procedures*



During the first phase of data collection, semi-structured interviews were completed with each participant. These interviews sought to explore the participants' experiences of coming to secondary school, and discover what students with dyslexia found supportive in preparing for and during the transition. In this sense, phase 1 of the data collection aimed to answer research questions 1 and 2. Once phase 1 interviews were completed with each participant, it was possible to complete an analysis of this data. Analysing the data at this point enabled the researcher to discover important

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

themes regarding the aspects of transition that participants experienced as difficult and the mechanisms that helped them during this time, including current self-advocacy behaviours. Identifying these themes prior to the implementation of the second phase of data collection made it possible to identify the types of self-advocacy skills that the participants were likely to find most supportive. The researcher built on this information in order to create a draft set of original self-advocacy materials which:

- Directly related to the difficulties identified by the participants during phase 1
- Could potentially support participants to manage such difficulties more effectively
- Built on strategies participants identified during phase 1 as being supportive

Further details on the creation of the draft materials are presented in Chapter 5. Once the creation of self-advocacy materials had been completed, it was possible to commence the second phase of data collection. SENCOs were contacted again to arrange a second semi-structured interview with each participant. As part of this interview, participants were presented with the draft self-advocacy materials. They were asked to explore these in turn and their views were sought on each. Participants were asked to consider whether being taught such skills or having access to similar materials prior to their transition would have supported them during this process. They were also asked to make suggestions on how to improve the draft materials and when and how they should be used. In this sense, the second phase of data collection aimed to answer research question 3. At this stage, it was then possible to analyse the phase 2 data and refine the draft materials based on the views of participants.

All interviews took place at the participants' school, in a quiet room. Only the researcher and the participant were present during each interview. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. Participants were recorded using a digital audio recorder, allowing the researcher to later transcribe the interview verbatim for the data analysis process. Table 3.2 outlines the research procedures, including the participant recruitment procedure, with a timeline of when each activity was completed.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Table 3.2

### *Research Procedures and Time Line*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Stage of Research</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<b>March-April 2014</b>	Recruitment	Gathering of school contact information from EPs
<b>May-June 2014</b>	Recruitment	Contacting school SENCOs and research information sent
<b>July 2014</b>	Recruitment	Head Teacher consent forms sent
<b>Aug-Sep 2014</b>	Recruitment	Parental consent sought
<b>Sep-Nov 2014</b>	Recruitment	Initial meetings with participants and informed consent sought
<b>Oct-Dec 2014</b>	Data Collection	Phase 1 semi-structured interviews
<b>Dec 2014-Jan 2015</b>	Data Analysis	Phase 1 data transcribed and thematic analysis completed
<b>Jan-Feb 2015</b>	Data Analysis	Draft self-advocacy material creation
<b>Feb 2015</b>	Data Collection	Phase 2 semi-structured interviews
<b>Feb-March 2015</b>	Data Analysis	Phase 2 data transcribed and thematic analysis completed
<b>March 2015</b>	Data Analysis	Draft materials refined
<b>March 2015</b>	De-briefing	Information sent to participants, parents and SENCOs
<b>Dec 2014- April 2015</b>	Write-up	Thesis write-up including overall data analysis

### **3.7 Strategies for data gathering**

The purpose of the current research was to explore participant experiences of transition to secondary school, while gaining an understanding of what is supportive during this time and what they find difficult. A second aim of the research is to gain participants' perspectives on a range of self-advocacy materials.

With this in mind, semi-structured interviews were completed as this provided an opportunity for the participants to tell the researcher about their experiences of transition, and allowed the researcher to ask questions about aspects which were relevant to the research (Willig, 2008). The qualitative nature of a semi-structured interview allowed the participant to explore the meanings they attached to the process of transitioning to secondary school, enabling them to share their views in their own words. Importantly, it acknowledged the subjective and fluid nature of participants' views, as semi-structured interviews were flexible enough to allow the researcher to explore multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives which developed during the interviews (Warren, 2001). King and Horrocks (2010) argue that this level of flexibility is a key requirement of qualitative interviewing. It was necessary for the researcher to respond to issues that emerged during the interview to ensure the participants' perspectives on the topics under investigation were effectively and adequately explored. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher and participant to enter into dialogue, affording the researcher the opportunity to modify and change the questions being put to participants in response to important and interesting issues being raised (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

In addition to this flexible and fluid dialogue, it was necessary for the researcher to use questioning and comments to steer the interview to obtain types of data which would answer the research questions (Willig, 2008). In the current research, it was important to find the right balance between ensuring the participants remained focused on the areas being explored (dyslexia, transition and self-advocacy), and allowing participants the opportunity to redefine the topic under investigation to generate new insights for the researcher (Willig, 2008). In order to achieve this balance, it was necessary to carefully construct an 'interview guide' for both phase 1 and 2 interviews (Appendices 12 and 13) which outlined the main topics the researcher covered. Unlike traditional interview schedules, which use specific questions in a predetermined order, the interview guide helped the researcher not to lose sight of the research questions. It

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

allowed the researcher to be flexible about the phrasing of questions, the order in which they are asked and empowered the participants to take the line of questioning in an unanticipated direction (King & Horrocks, 2010). Crucially, as Smith and Osborn (2003) predicted, this helped guide the interview rather than dictated it.

Both phase 1 and 2 interview guides were designed to encourage participants to talk in-depth about their experiences during the transition to secondary school. Questions were prepared which were largely open and expansive, which encouraged the participants to recall their experiences as easily as possible. Where it was required, the researcher used techniques suggested by Robson (2002) such as probes to encourage participants to speak in more detail, and prompts to help them articulate their answer. Leading questions were avoided across both interviews to ensure responses were as authentic as possible. While there were common features across both interviews, phase 1 and 2 interview guides differed to some degree in the type of questioning that was used and the areas that were covered. This reflects how each interview was being driven by different research questions (Willig, 2008).

The interview guide for phase 1 (Appendix 12) was developed in order to answer research questions one and two. The questions were divided under three subheadings:

- Experiences of transition during primary school
- Experiences of transition once attending secondary school
- Overarching reflections on the experience of transition to secondary school

As the researcher aimed to explore participants' experiences, open and broad questions were used at the start (Smith & Osborn, 2003). "When you were in primary school, how did you feel about the move to secondary school?" (question 1, phase 1 interview guide, Appendix 12). By asking questions which were not too specific or explicit, the researcher was able to get as close to what the participants believed without leading them to respond in a certain way. Having established participants' general perspectives, the researcher focused in on more specific elements using a technique known as 'funnelling' (Smith & Osborn, 2003). That is, the researcher followed up the broad and open questions with increasingly more targeted questions or probes which required the participant to give their views about specific issues. By adopting the funnelling technique, the researcher made use of such questions later in the interview



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

process. For example, “How did having dyslexia impact on this experience?” (question 10, phase 1 interview guide, Appendix 12).

The structure and questioning techniques used within this interview guide were developed to ensure all areas of interest were covered. However, it was always the researcher’s intention to be very flexible during phase 1 interviews, to ensure the data collected reflected the genuine experiences of participants. As such, it was accepted that not all questions would be asked to all participants, and some participants explored related, but unanticipated, issues and experiences (See Appendix 14 for an example)

The phase 2 interview guide (Appendix 13) was designed to answer the third and final research question. As such, it was designed to ensure the researcher would gain an understanding of the participants’ perceptions of self-advocacy skills, by exploring with them draft materials which related to the difficulties they identified in phase 1. Given the need to cover the five materials that were developed during this interview, the phase 2 interview guide was designed to provide an opportunity for the participants to give their perspectives on each. As is shown in Appendix 13, the researcher presented the participant with each resource in turn. While this structure offered less flexibility to participants, it remained important to use open questions in order to explore their perceptions about each resource, such as “What are your views about this material?” (question 1, phase 2 interview guide, Appendix 13).

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Following transcription of the interviews, a thematic analysis was completed on the data set for phase 1 and, later, for phase 2. Thematic analysis is a method which provides a rich and detailed analysis of large and complex sets of data to make it communicable to others (Boyatzis, 1998). It allows the researcher to search across multiple data items, in order to identify recurring patterns (or themes) relevant to the research. Previously, some authors have tended to characterise thematic analysis as a tool which is used within other qualitative methods (Boyatzis, 1998), rather than a method itself. For example, Kellehear (1993) compares thematic analysis to the process used within approaches such as grounded theory. However, more recently Braun and Clarke (2006) have argued thematic analysis should be considered a method in its own right, and argue this offers the researcher a number of advantages over other qualitative methods.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

One advantage of thematic analysis is that it is not linked to any pre-existing theoretical framework, making it a more flexible approach. For example, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is wholly concerned with exploring personal experiences, perceptions or accounts rather than attempting to produce an objective statement about the phenomenon being explored (Smith and Osborn, 2003). While understanding the personal experiences of the participants was one aim of the current research, this only formed one part of the purpose of the research, meaning a more flexible approach was needed. Conversely, thematic analysis can be used across different paradigms, theoretical perspectives and epistemological approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, thematic analysis fitted with the critical realist framework adopted within the current research; meaning the analysis could recognise the individual perspectives of the participants, while allowing the researcher to make a comment on certain similarities which have been socially constructed. Given the multiple aims of this research, this level of flexibility was pertinent to selecting an appropriate method of data analysis. Another advantage that thematic analysis has over other data analysis methods is that it is relatively accessible to researchers with little experience of conducting qualitative research. Braun and Clarke note that unlike other methods such as IPA or grounded theory, it is not necessary to have a detailed theoretical and technical knowledge of the approach. Yet, thematic analysis still provides a detailed and rich understanding of the data, which can generate unanticipated insights and is accessible to audiences who are unfamiliar with qualitative methods.

Although described as an accessible approach to analysing data, there are a number of pitfalls to avoid when trying to conduct a high quality thematic analysis. As with other qualitative methods, it is important for the process of the analysis to be communicated to the reader to ensure it is clear how and why themes were identified from the data set. When this has not been communicated research can be subject to the ‘anything goes’ criticism, as highlighted by Antaki, Billig, Edwards, and Potter (2003). To avoid such criticism, it was necessary for the researcher to be as transparent as possible during the analysis process, ensuring it was clear how themes were identified, and the extracts which they were based upon (this process is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter). In this sense, the analysis was a conscious and deliberate creation of the researcher, but one that formed a justifiable argument to the reader who has not read the entire data set (Foster & Parker, 1995). To achieve this, the researcher ensured themes were relevant to the research questions being answered and based on multiple

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

instances of coded data across a range of data items, as opposed to generating themes on one or few instances of a phenomenon (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). The process was visually represented using thematic maps to facilitate effective communication of these themes (See Appendices 15 and 19 for examples).

Although thematic analysis is the most commonly used form of analysis in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2012) there has traditionally been no agreed upon process for conducting thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1989). As such, Braun and Clark (2006) argue that in order to ensure good quality analysis is conducted, it is essential that researchers provide a clear description of the process and practice used. This allows the research to be evaluated and compared with other research related to that topic. Braun and Clark's (2006) stages of thematic analysis were used as a systematic process for analysing the data. These stages are outlined below, alongside a description of how this was practically achieved using examples from the current research.

1. The first stage is familiarisation with the data. At this point, the audio data was transcribed into written form by the researcher. The researcher immersed himself in the data through repeated readings of the entire dataset, searching for meanings and patterns. During this phase, notes were made in a research diary regarding initial ideas for codes and themes. For example, the following extract from the research diary demonstrates one of the researcher's early formulations following initial readings of the transcripts "...almost every participant has described talking to peers or family members during this process. It will be important to consider in more details exactly how participants used this support during their transition". As can be seen in the thematic map for phase 1 (Appendix 15) this initial formulation contributed to the development of Theme 5 (Support from Friends and Family) within the final data analysis.
2. The second stage involved the production of initial codes from the data. Codes are the most basic segments of the data which identify a feature of interest to the researcher, and help organise the data into meaningful groups. (Boyatzis, 1998). The data was worked through systematically giving equal attention to each transcript. The researcher identified any extracts of interest which may form the basis of repeating patterns. Following several readings, codes were identified and written directly on to the transcript to the right of the verbatim text (Appendix 14). To help manage the data meaningfully and identify potential

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

patterns, a working code list (see Appendix 16 for an example) was used to help group codes into broad areas so that similar extracts could be placed together. For example, there were a variety of codes which were related to the area named 'Perceptions of transition and secondary school'. As such, all codes that fell under this area were placed together on the working list of codes. A colour coding system was also used, to help the researcher quickly identify in which transcripts the codes had been found.

3. The third stage involved sorting the different codes into potential themes while collating the relevant coded extracts for each. The researcher started to consider which codes might combine to inform the main overarching themes and sub-themes within them. This process was completed by hand, and involved the researcher cutting out codes and compiling them into potential themes (For photographic examples of this, see Appendix 17). Central to the analysis in phase 1 was the identification of mechanisms which enabled participants to be successful during transition. The researcher ensured that codes relating to these mechanisms were highlighted and incorporated into the potential themes and subthemes.

Themes can be identified through an inductive or deductive approach. The former can be thought of as being 'bottom-up' and is data driven, thus the themes come from the experiences of the participants. The latter is a more theoretical approach, and is driven by the researcher's analytical interests. The current research had multiple aims in this respect, thus a combination of these approaches were used across the two phases of analysis. In phase 1, an inductive approach was used as this analysis aimed to gain a clearer understanding of the transition experiences of participants. During the phase 2 analysis, the researcher sought to answer specific questions regarding the perceptions of participants on a predetermined set of materials. This was more aligned with a deductive approach to identifying themes.

It is also important to acknowledge that a semantic, as opposed to a latent, approach to identifying themes was taken. That is, themes were identified using the explicit surface meaning of the extracts and the researcher did not attempt to make an interpretation of what was being said (as is done when taking a latent

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

approach). This also fits with the wider approach of this research which aims to empower participants and respect the voice of young people. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that when taking a semantic approach, it is not until later in the analytic process the researcher makes an attempt to interpret, theorise and understand the broader meaning of themes.

4. In step four, themes were reviewed and reconstructed. Codes for each theme were read once more to ensure they formed a coherent pattern. Themes were abandoned where there was too little data to support them, while others collapsed into each other. (For more detail of this process, see Appendix 18 for working versions of the thematic map). Codes were moved around until each theme was considered to capture the data accurately. It was then necessary to look at the themes from more meta-perspective, and to ensure they accurately reflected the dataset as a whole. This information was then visually represented through the creation of the final thematic maps (Appendices 15 and 19).
5. Phase five is the defining and naming of themes. This involved identifying the essence of what each theme is about and how it relates to the overall 'story' of the data in relation to the research questions. It was at this stage that the researcher started to consider how the themes were located in the broader social context, and initial interpretations of the analysis were recorded in the research journal.
6. Finally, stage six involved the write-up of the thematic analysis (presented in Chapter 4) which tells the complicated story of the data. To provide sufficient evidence for the analytic narrative direct quotes were used which were considered to encapsulate the researcher's interpretation of the data. At times, it was also necessary to include vignettes of the dialogue between researcher and participants as this provided relevant and important context (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved relating the data back to the research questions and previous literature.

### **3.9 Validity and Trustworthiness**

When conducting a piece of qualitative research, establishing validity is essential if it is to have any practical use for the people whose benefit the research was intended (Yardley, 2000). A related concept is to consider the degree to which research can be considered trustworthy, or credible (Robson, 2002). Therefore, it is necessary to validate the research through practices which ensure quality. As such, some authors have outlined practices which researchers can use to promote validity and trustworthiness (Elliott, Fischer and Rennie, 1999; Yardley, 2000); although it is recognised that these will vary depending on the methodology being used (Secker, Wimbush, Watson, & Milhurn, 1995). These practices will now be explored in the context of the current research.

One way the trustworthiness of this research was demonstrated was through the researcher's commitment and rigour (Yardley, 2000). The concept of commitment refers to the prolonged engagement with the topic, not just within the role of researcher but also in terms of personal experience. As was outlined in the introductory chapter, the area of dyslexia has been a prolonged interest of the researcher as he has the experience of having dyslexia. Furthermore, this is the second piece of research in which the researcher has investigated concepts surrounding dyslexia. Prolonged engagement in terms of this research is demonstrated through repeated immersion in the data. To achieve this, the researcher completed all interviews himself and engaged in repeated listening of the audio recordings. Transcripts were completed by the researcher personally and these were read multiple times prior to and during the data analysis stage. This commitment to the data has led to increased descriptive validity (Robson, 2002).

Rigour refers to the resulting completeness of the data collection and analysis (Yardley, 2000). Participants were able to supply in-depth data as demonstrated by the average length of interviews, which were between 25 and 55 minutes. This level of engagement enabled the researcher to summarise and check interpretations of what the participants said during the interviews with them. A second aspect of rigour also relates to the completeness of the data analysis and interpretation. In order to explore multiple areas of interest and to gain a multi-faceted understanding of participants' experiences, the researcher met with participants on two occasions. This led to a more rounded and completed interpretation of the phenomenon being explored.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Another method for increasing trustworthiness concerns the coherence and transparency of the research. This relates to the researcher's ability to construct an analytic narrative that is characteristic of the overall analysis (Elliott, et al., 1999). For this, the reader should not only have an understanding of the reality that has been constructed (coherence), but they should be clear on how this reality was devised (transparency). Transparency was achieved by detailing the procedures used during data collection (see above). Furthermore, the process of coding and identifying themes is explained, and the reader is enabled to understand the patterns identified through the analysis by presenting extracts of data throughout the findings chapter (Yardley, 2000). Coherence and transparency has also been achieved through consensus replication. This was ensured by asking a peer, who was familiar with thematic analysis, to interpret the credibility of the data (Elliott et al., 1999). A detailed audit trail was kept in order to increase the validity of the research (Robson, 2002). This included a full record of activities; including the raw data (interviews and transcripts), a research journal which detailed reflections of the research process, and details of the coding and data analysis.

Testimonial validity was established by ensuring the participants were able to indicate whether the interpretation of their views accurately reflects their experience (Stiles, 1999). In the current research, the researcher met with participants on two occasions. Participants gave details on their experience during phase 1 interviews, meaning there was an opportunity for the researcher to check interpretations of this, prior to conducting phase 2 interviews. This practice was important to complete, as the content of phase 2 interviews were based on these interpretations. All participants were able to confirm that the researcher's interpretation of their experience was accurate, thus phase 2 interviews could be completed without the need for amendments to be made.

Part of ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of qualitative research relates to researchers reflexivity - being able to analyse how subjective and intersubjective elements influence their research (Finlay, 2002). As a reflexive researcher I had to engage in an ongoing evaluation of subjective responses, interpretations, and the research process itself. It forced a shift away from understanding the data collected as something objective, and towards recognition that I, as researcher played an active role in constructing knowledge gained from the research. Reflexivity requires me to disclose my own values and assumptions in order to allow readers the opportunity to consider alternative interpretation (Elliott et al., 1999).

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

The process of reflexivity started at the beginning of the research process, and was present throughout the different stages. From the outset an attempt was made to acknowledge any motivations, assumptions and interests which could have potentially skewed the research in a particular direction, had they been ignored. For example, the researcher has made it clear to the reader that one motivation for completing this research is his personal experience of dyslexia and the subsequent impact this had on education (see Chapter 1). This level of reflexivity was also necessary throughout the data collection stage, as without this constant reflection, the researcher's questions and responses could have potentially been skewed to gaining answers which fitted with his existing perceptions. For example, the following extract was taken from the research diary, following a phase 1 interview:

“Although I have made a conscious effort to pursue lines of questioning which relate to both positive and negative experiences, when Saul spoke almost entirely about positive experiences, I found myself pushing for him to make sure there were not negative experiences he had not told me about. Reflecting on this, I wondered if I push in the same way for participants to give positive experiences, when their discourse is mostly about negative experiences”.

This level of reflexivity allowed the researcher to bring his own experiences into consciousness, and subsequently modify responses to participants to ensure the data collection was not influenced by these.

It was also important to remain reflexive during the data analysis and interpretation stages. Without this, the voice of the participants could have been lost and the researcher's position could have become unduly privileged. To avoid this, another psychologist was asked to check whether the researcher's codes reflected the true nature of the transcripts. This feedback supported the researcher's reflection on the consistency of the analysis. Furthermore, the research diary was also utilised throughout the analysis process, providing the researcher with a tool to reflect upon the codes and themes that were being constructed, and forcing the researcher to consider alternative interpretations of the data.

### **3.10 Ethical Issues**

The British Psychological Society Code for Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010), was used to guide the ethical decisions outlined here. Firstly, it was necessary to



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

obtain ethical permission from the University of East London to undertake the research (Appendix 20). In addition, permission had to be sought from the Local Authority before conducting the research. The Local Authority required all proposed research to be approved by an ethical committee along with the expressed written consent from the Principal Educational Psychologist. It was also necessary to seek permission from Head Teachers of the schools which wished to take part in the research (Appendix 7). The BPS (2010) requires researchers to gain informed consent from every person from whom data are gathered. Potential participants were given an information sheet and informed consent form (Appendices 8 and 11) which provided sufficient information about the research in a form which was accessible and understandable. As all participants were under 16 years of age, the additional consent of legal guardians was also sought (Appendix 10) before students were allowed to consent to taking part in the research. Participants were informed that during the data gathering phase that they were free to withdraw or modify their consent and request their data be removed from the research. As the BPS notes, there are necessary time limits on data withdrawal and this was made clear to participants on the informed consent form.

The recruitment strategy and the semi-structured interviews meant participants could not remain anonymous. Schools and the researcher knew who were being interviewed. However, every effort was made to protect the anonymity of their individual data. Once data was obtained, information was changed so that no participant was identifiable. Furthermore, data protection was achieved by storing all paper information in a locked cabinet, and all digital information in an encrypted file. Finally, the BPS (2010) states that researchers should endeavour to identify any risks to participants and outline how these will be managed. For some young people, the experience of transition and their formulations around having dyslexia might have been a sensitive issue, and they might have found finding talking about it difficult. As such, all potential participants were made aware of this risk before providing informed consent, and were asked to think carefully about whether participating in the research was something they felt comfortable doing. They were also explicitly told they could stop their involvement in the interview at any point and should they have needed it, they would have been offered the opportunity to speak with the researcher in private following the termination of the interview. In this sense, as a TEP, the researcher has the clinical skills to effectively debrief any students who may have become distressed by this experience.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

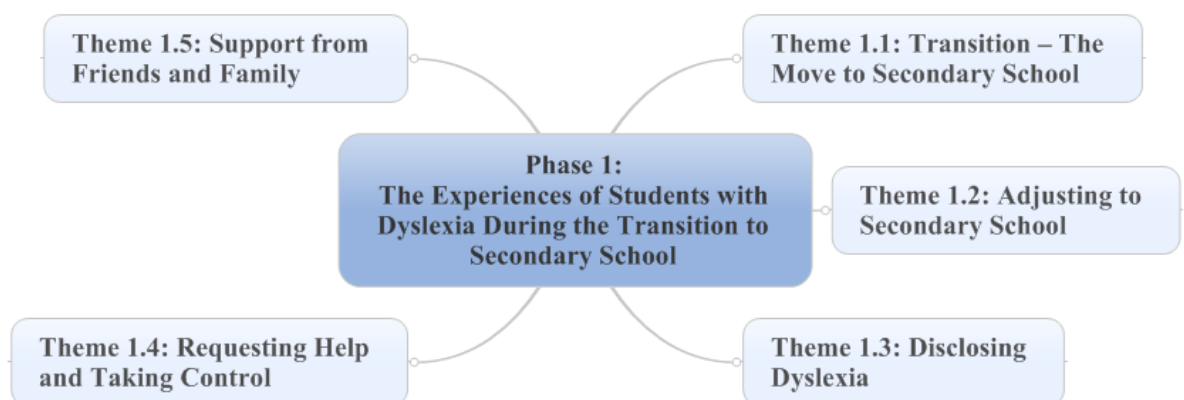
This chapter outlines the research findings following the completion of thematic analyses of the two data sets. In order to provide a narrative for these findings, quotes from participants have been used to illustrate themes and subthemes generated through an interpretation of the data. Throughout both analyses, thematic maps are provided to allow for a visualisation of the findings. These findings will be explored further in the final chapter (Chapter five) which will outline how the findings relate to the research literature on this topic, the research questions and the implications that can be drawn from this.

### 4.2 Overarching Themes and Subthemes for Phase 1 Data Analysis

The inductive thematic analysis for the phase 1 data generated five overarching themes which encompass nineteen subthemes (see figure 4.1). These themes describe the experiences of students with dyslexia who have completed a transition from primary to secondary school. Additionally, they explore participants' use of self-advocacy skills. Findings from the phase 1 data analysis were then used to inform the creation of five self-advocacy based materials, which in turn, informed the focus of phase 2 data collection.

Figure 4.1

*Thematic map illustrating the five overarching themes for phase 1.*

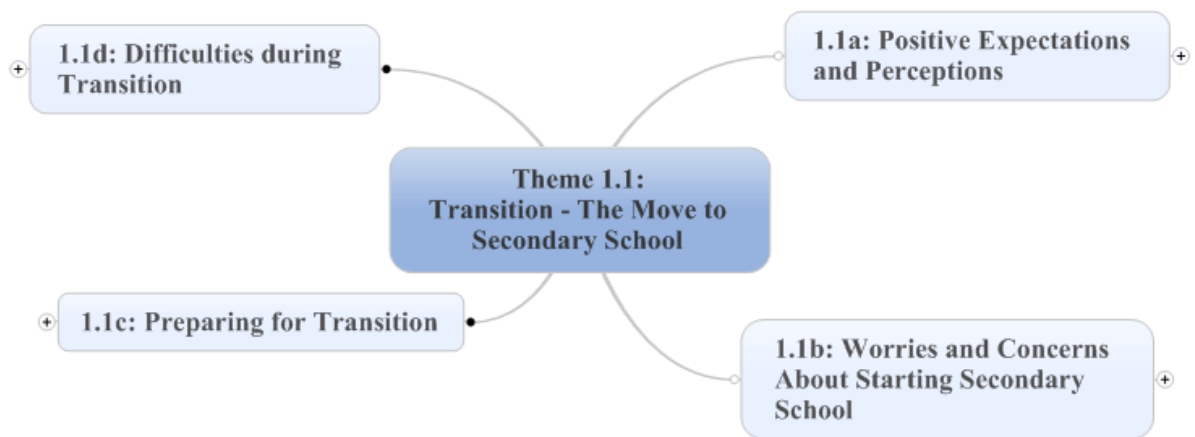


### 4.3 Theme 1.1: Transition – The Move to Secondary School

This theme outlines participants' experiences of transition, including their perceptions prior to moving, how they prepared for secondary school and their experience of the move itself.

Figure 4.2

*Thematic map illustrating theme 1.1 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.3.1 Subtheme 1.1a: Positive expectations and perceptions:** Just over half of the participants perceived the transition to secondary school as something they were looking forward to.

Researcher: *when you were in year 6 and you were getting ready starting to think about moving to secondary school, how how was you feeling then?*

Participant: *Umm excited... ....Umm new experiences... ... And new friends*

(Marie, lines 3-8)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

About a third of the participants were looking forward to secondary school because of negative experiences at primary school, including bullying and problems with teachers.

*“As we got into year six cos of that, so I was really looking forward to coming to [name of secondary school] ... ....And that I I kept on telling my mum that I’m counting down the days until my primary ended and then when when I finally got to secondary school I was happy cos a lot of things made it better”*

(Mike, lines, 64-66)

Although there were a number of participants who were not looking forward to transition as a whole, all of them except one spoke about something they were excited about or felt would be positive about transition. Often this related to the participants' perceptions of secondary school work being more interactive and practical.

*“Especially doing better sub- doing things like science and art and those kind of subjects could we never really, we did not do them in primary school, they were like, especially science I remember just getting so bored in science lessons because we were just going over boring stuff that we had done before and that we had we had already done every single year, and that I knew, it was so boring and simple and we were not actually doing anything practical because it was a primary school... ...but I was really looking forward to secondary school and knowing that I am going to be doing better science, and I am doing better science and I am looking forward to making something blow up hahaha”*

(Hank, lines 121-123)

Another appealing aspect of moving to secondary school was getting to participate in after-school clubs or enrichment.

Researcher: *was there anything about this school in particular that sort of appealed to you or you felt excited by?*

Participant: *Errrm mostly the concept is very different, like so some of the stuff that you get to, so it is enrichment... after school you get to have like an hour or something of doing a sport or an activity that is something you choose, what it is*

(Saul, lines 29-30)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

### 4.3.2 Subtheme 1.1b: Worries and concerns about starting secondary

**school:** All participants spoke about being worried about at least one thing relating to the transition to secondary school. Often, participants expressed concerns about not being able to meet the academic expectations of secondary school.

Researcher: *when it was leading up to the time that you were thinking about having to move to secondary school, what were you thinking about moving?*

Participant: *Worried, like the lessons are gonna be hard and I will not be able to complete like the tasks and stuff*

(Holly, lines 45-46)

In particular, participants were worried about how their literacy related difficulties may hinder their academic performance in secondary school, such as Jesse, who described the lessons he was worrying before he got to secondary school.

*“Err English because like sometimes like when I’m reading like it makes me struggle and erm maths because sometimes in the questions they like give you letters or words and stuff”*

(Jesse, line 32)

Another common thing that worried participants was making new friends and experiencing peer relationship difficulties.

Researcher: *Yeah ok what what kind of things were making you feel a bit scared?*

Participant: *Basically meeting new people... ..Cos not all the people from my err primary school err came*

(Gus, lines 19-22)

*“Well like I didn’t know no one so Yeah and just it’s a bigger place, and there-maybe not everyone is as nice as you think they are gonna be \*laugh\*”*

(Skyler, lines 10-12)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

There also seemed to be a link between how participants perceived themselves as learners and potential issues with peers. Participants worried about being judged negatively by their peers based upon their academic abilities.

Researcher: *So when you were in primary school, how did you feel about erm, getting ready to come to secondary school, w-w-what kind of things happened?*

Participant: *Quite worried 'cause I'd like, my levels were lower than other people, like most of my friends and... ..Like I was a bit scared of what other people thought of me and yeah"*

(Skyler, lines 3-6)

Participants also expressed concerns regarding negative reactions from peers, should they notice when they found something difficult due to their dyslexia, such as spelling or reading.

*"Erm I was worried about 'cause they say in class and I couldn't do something like spell something or read something... ..I was worried in case they would laugh at me"*

(Walter, 28-30)

**4.3.3 Subtheme 1.1c: Preparing for transition:** All participants spoke about the importance of preparing for the transition to secondary school. This often related to gaining reassurance from others, or seeking information about secondary school. Over half of the students described opportunities they had to speak with older peers who already had some experience of secondary school.

*"Erm well I mean, I asked, I asked some other people go to the school and have had and maybe in the year above or a few years above like, you know, and I asked them for advice and stuff and how it is and yeah"*

(Hank, line 175)

Participants also gained information and reassurance from family members. Again, participants placed value on speaking to family members who had experience and knowledge of secondary school, such as older siblings. Talking to another young person was preferable over speaking to teachers as they felt able to speak more freely.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“Yeah cos my sisters is in year eleven now and when I was in like year six she was in like year nine so she would tell me what it was like... ..I used to ask her and she and she used to make me like not not worry about learning and all that... ..Cos it's just, when you're talking to a teacher you can't talk to them like how you talk to your mates... ..It it's a lot harder cos you have to be like a little bit more formal. When you are with like your sister and you can just like talk to her like how you do with all your mates”*

(Mike, lines 112- 122)

A couple of the participants had been able to speak to older students who also had dyslexia. For example, Marie described talking to her brother (who also has dyslexia) who was able to tell her about his experiences of secondary school. Marie then went on to describe how this appeared to provide another level of reassurance for her.

*“Because it's like they've already been through it and they've survived it. Like telling you like it will be ok, like it's alright”*

(Marie, line 156)

A number of participants were also reassured by meeting their secondary school teachers prior to transition, as it made them feel better able to ask for support should they need it.

Participant: *I met new people, new teachers and everything...*

Researcher: *Yeah did it make, how did that make you feel?*

Participant: *Erm more of my situation goes more down more down [nerves about transition]... Because if I know the teachers, the teacher will probably help*

(Walter, lines 66-74)

Multiple participants also spoke about the importance of opportunities to find out more about secondary school, such as during visits to secondary school prior to transition. These experiences allowed them to know what it is like to be a year seven and become aware of things such as the structure of the school day.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“Oh yeah we had like a student visit thing where you done a little taster of what you would be doing like science and music... .. We were put in groups so like year seven- last year we were just in one class so we did not move, we did not have different lessons, we all have the same lessons so- and now we are just split into sets like people that need help more yeah”*

(Holly, lines 82-88)

**4.3.4 Subtheme 1.1d: Difficulties during transition:** While participants who received adequate knowledge about their new school (and the support on offer) placed much value on having this when preparing for transition, a number of participants did not feel they had all the information they needed, which led to subsequent difficulties during transition.

*“Well I thought it [transition to secondary] was kind of hard because I didn't know what secondary school would be like”*

(Gus, line 4)

Researcher: *how did you find out about secondary school?*

Participant: *I didn't really!*

Researcher: *You didn't? oh, so did you- nobody sort of said to you about what school would be like, or nothing like that?*

Participant: *Not really...*

Researcher: *...What kinda things would you have liked to know about?*

Participant: *Ssst-just the little things that just help whilst you are in school really... ..yeah just anything really- anything that might help would have been better*

(Skyler, lines 42–53)



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participants described a number of organisational issues which they found difficult upon arriving at secondary school. For example, a number of participants found adjusting to the size of the building and learning their way around difficult.

*“Umm the only thing I was worried about was getting lost... ...it happened like the first week cos in the first week obviously you get lost cos they, you don’t know where all the classrooms are”*

(Mike, 142-146)

Participants also found it difficult to learn how to organise themselves and be more independent, such as using a timetable effectively to manage getting to their lessons.

Participant: *I didn’t know I didn’t know what to do with the timetable*

Researcher: *\*Laughs\* they’re a bit confusing aren’t they?*

Participant: *Yeah*

Researcher: *So did you suss it out in the end?*

Participant: *Err I stuffed it inside of my planner*

Researcher: *Mmm did someone help you read it?*

Participant: *No I just stuffed it in*

(Walter, lines 383-389)

About half of the participants felt that moving away from their primary school friends was a worrying part of transition as they may have difficulties making new friends.

Researcher: *Ah okay, and what about that [moving to a different school from friends at primary] made you slightly worried?*

Participant: *Oh it just made me slightly worried that I wouldn’t have any friends*

(Saul, lines 77-78)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Over a third had some negative experiences with peers, for example, being made fun of for being different or for having some academic difficulties relating to their dyslexia. When participants experienced negative peer interactions, this led to decreases in perceived self-confidence.

*“Yeah and I kinda- I kinda of - I make like a few \*laugh\* a few friends and, but it was quite hard as well because like people used to tell me that I’m like stupid and just and just said that just to make me feel like I- I kind of- I felt like I kind of boosted my confidence but then it just like - it just went after that”*

(Skyler, line 75)

**4.3.5 Theme overview and material development:** Participants’ feelings prior to the move to secondary school were mixed, with some looking forward to the change, and others identifying worries and concerns. Despite these mixed feelings, all participants were able to identify aspects of their transition which helped them prepare for the challenges of secondary school. This largely centred on seeking reassurance and information from others. Participants who felt they had not received adequate information about their secondary school reported more difficulties once they arrived. Making new peer relationships was a prominent feature of participants’ experience of starting secondary school, with about half describing this as positive, and the other half reporting difficulties with peers.

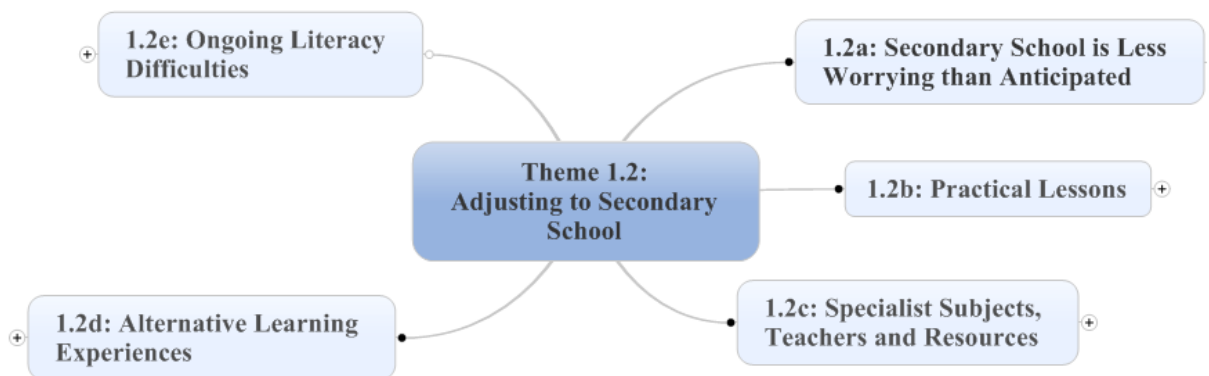
Having the right knowledge and skills to communicate with others is commonly associated with self-advocacy (Pocock, et al., 2002). Following this analysis, the draft self-advocacy based material ‘Transition Fact Finder’ (Appendix 21) was developed by building on subthemes within this overarching theme of Transition. Given the value participants placed on being fully informed about transition, this material supports students to carefully consider all the information they may need, or the questions they would like answered. It achieves this by outlining key areas and example question that participants identified as being things they worried about, for example ‘meeting new people’ and ‘problems with peers’. Participants who reported having a more successful transition discussed the importance of being able to speak with a range of people, including family, peers and teacher. As such, this material supports students to create a questionnaire which can subsequently be used as a tool to facilitate them to acquire the information they need from a range of people.

### 4.4 Theme 1.2: Adjusting to Secondary School

This theme outlines participants' experiences while they adjusted to their new school. This largely included facilitative aspects of secondary school, although there were ongoing concerns with literacy. An overview of this theme can be seen in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

*Thematic map illustrating theme 1.2 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.4.1 Subtheme 1.2a: Secondary school is less worrying than anticipated:** A number of participants felt that once they had overcome the initial move to secondary school, they stopped worrying about many of the things they had been concerned about.

*“I dunno, I think actually, I think erm your worri- you are kind of worried about it, and then when you get there you realise it was nothing to worry about, but the only problem is that if you tell people- I’ve noticed that like that person who came in, if he told me that when I was more worried, I probably would have- or if he had said that you probably won’t feel it, I probably would think, no that is not true, they are just trying to make me feel better... ...Whereas I find it is actually the truth”*

(Saul, lines 148-150)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Generally, participants felt their teachers were friendly and helped them to settle into secondary school.

*“they just make sure like that- they just want you to make you feel like you’re welcome and that you’re comfortable and just yeah”*

(Skyler, line 204)

Although many participants worried about making new friends, and some experienced peer difficulties upon transition to secondary school, other participants had a positive experience when making new friends.

Researcher: *so one of the worries you had for a little while was that making friends might be/ a bit difficult*

Participant: */yeah but it’s weird, when I when I erm got here I just accepted it, so I was worrying that it would be boring and I wouldn’t be fun, and then when I got here because I was worrying so much it kind of, I like didn’t do anything, it was fine, I didn’t even think about- I didn’t even try arrange to see him again because, I have seen him, but I didn’t try and say, can I...*

(Saul, lines 83-84)

**4.4.2 Subtheme 1.2b: Practical lessons:** Two thirds of participants felt that lessons in secondary school incorporated more practical elements. Often, this preference for opportunities to work practically meant participants could create and express their ideas without the burden of struggling with reading or writing, meaning they felt they could utilise some of their strengths.

Participant: *because then you do not have to do any work, you are like- it is not confusing, you just have to do like gymnastics, erm bench-ball, dodgeball, dance and so on yeah*

Researcher: *Yeah so when you say there is not any work, do you mean there is not any written work?*

Participant: *Yeah, and you do not have to like read anything out, you just have to just like you normally work with like some groups, groups or partners or trios or*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*something like that and then you just like, make up a routine like, you fit all your ideas together and then yeah*

(Holly, lines 246-248)

Participants were able to recognise that they are better able to learn when lessons are made practical, thus they felt positive about school when teachers made attempts to make lessons more practical.

*“Yeah yeah because I learn a lot better doing practical things, which is why I really liked my teacher that I had... ....because sh- she understood that, she tried to make practical ways of teaching aspects and yeah”*

(Hank, line 134)

**4.4.3 Subtheme 1.2c: Specialist subjects, teachers and resources:** Participants also felt that another positive aspect of learning at secondary school related to having specialist provisions, resources and subject teachers. This appeared to allow participants to engage with the learning experience more fully, as opposed to the limited nature of primary school lessons. Participants placed value on having better resources in secondary, such as drama studios, PE equipment and facilities. For example, these things made Jesse feel as though he was now completing these subjects 'properly'.

*“Like er like drama we never had proper drama in primary because we would stay in one room for it, but now it’s in secondary we move to every different room. Maths is different erm and errr our PE we wouldn’t really change into a normal PE kit”*

(Jesse, line 18)

Being able to use specialist resources also appeared to make the lessons more appealing for participants.

Participant: *The lessons that I have now are very fun*

Researcher: *Oh good so what how are they different from erm your primary school lessons to make them more fun?*

Participant: *They don’t use Bunsen Burners... .... in primary*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

(Gus, lines 190-197)

Participants felt that having teachers with specialist knowledge led to a more engaging experiential learning experiences.

*“Especially in, and like having specialist teachers for specialist, for certain subjects like science and stuff because that is why, you know primary school science in my school, especially it being tiny, it was, it is very limited in what you can do. And then when I came to secondary school I was like yeah yeah!... ....I mean we did do something quite recently so one of the teachers did a demonstration that made erm that was er well he basically made a pulp that looks like vomit and smell like it as well but hey!... ....No but we had to get DNA out of it... ....which was fun”*

(Hank, lines 267-281)

**4.4.4: Subtheme 1.2d: Alternative learning experiences:** Participants often spoke positively about the opportunities for enriching learning experiences, which perhaps differ from more traditional classroom learning. For example, a number of the participants' secondary school offered enrichment time, whereby students are expected to be self-directed and choose activities where they could pursue interests or attend provisions such as homework clubs, which help them to manage subjects they would like extra support with.

*“Erm... like... for me personally, where I find it like quite difficult [academic learning] and like I- I like it where we have an extra hour and like we have that enrichment time, but during that enrichment time like, I still feel like I am learning something, so I like- I like to learn- like to <inaud> I learn a lot of stuff because it helps me focus and make my levels higher and yeah... ....there's stuff like homework club, so it helps me with my homework, then I can go ask the teachers and they can explain it to me so then like when I am at home my mum and dad might not be able to help me and then I know that I've got a teacher. And then, you can do loads of different stuff and you get to choose your enrichment”*

(Skyler, line 222)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participants also felt that opportunities for experiential learning have been helpful, providing an alternative way to learn about a subject, such as science.

*“And we done a thing called community day... ...And that’s when you got like science classes so you’d have to go to these different classrooms and on that day we got to go on an [local park] walk... ...So it was it was nice walking round like all the [local park], learning and we do that every year I think”*

(Mike, lines 426-430)

**4.4.5 Subtheme 1.2e: Ongoing literacy difficulties:** Participants continued to have difficulties with literacy once they got to secondary school. Often it appeared as though participants had not been supported to develop effective strategies for managing these difficulties.

*“Hard hard and like er say we got work and I don’t understand, I can’t really read it, then I dunno I just sit there and do nothing”*

(Walter, line 299)

The increasing pressure for participants to write more extensively appeared to be problematic.

*“for me it is not about, I mean, I do not want to boast but people say that my writing is good and that yeah, it is just the quantity of it is not, there isn’t really, I do not manage to do that much”*

(Hank, line 152)

Additionally, the increasing difficulty of the words participants were required to read and spell was causing difficulties across a range of subjects.

*“Yeah and like the words that you have to use are like the scientific words, you cannot use like ‘tummy’ you have to use ‘stomach’ and other things yeah”*

(Holly, line 225)

These difficulties often left participants feeling as though they would like more support with literacy.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“It would be good to have it [extra help] but I’m managing with every subject really without it but I’ve managed, but I’d be managing more with English if I had it”*

(Marie, line 126)

**4.4.6 Theme overview and material development:** As was seen in the previous theme, participants expressed various concerns regarding how they would cope with the demands of secondary school. However, participants often reported they had been better able to manage these demands than they had anticipated. When participants spoke about their actual experiences of adjusting to secondary school, they were able to identify many aspects which had been supportive in helping them be successful. This tended to include approaches to learning which would typically be thought of as utilising the strengths of dyslexic students, such as lessons which are practical, are experiential, and allow students to make use of psychical resources. The only difficulty participants reported as a subtheme was ongoing challenges with literacy based tasks.

Knowledge of strengths and being able to set goals is commonly associated with supporting young people to develop self-advocacy (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey 2000). The discrepancy between participants’ worries prior to transition and how well participants found they could actually manage secondary school, indicates that students with dyslexia tend to focus on the potential negative impact of their difficulties, as opposed to their many strengths and how these could be utilised in order to be successful. As such, the draft self-advocacy based material ‘Positive Goals for a Positive Start’ (Appendix 22) was created. This material requires students to complete a self-rating scale for a range skills and attributes, enabling them to identify the strengths they have. It then facilitates students to develop goals which relate to the aspects of secondary school they are worried about, and encourages students to outline the strengths they can utilise in order to achieve this goal successfully.

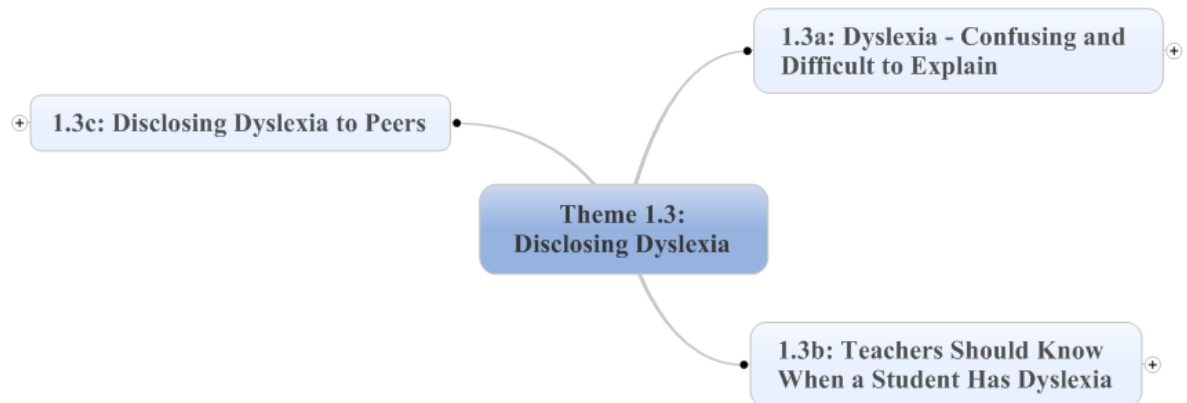
### **4.5 Theme 1.3: Disclosing Dyslexia**

This theme outlines the importance participants placed on disclosing dyslexia to both teachers and peers. However, this process was often complicated by difficulty understanding and explaining dyslexia. Figure 4.4 provides an overview of this theme.



Figure 4.4

*Thematic map illustrating theme 1.3 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.5.1 Subtheme 1.3a: Dyslexia - confusing and difficult to explain:** The vast majority of participants had some experience of trying to disclose or explain dyslexia to someone, including teachers and peers. While this was a necessary part of the transition to secondary school, participants repeatedly described this process as difficult, often due to the confusing nature of the dyslexia concept.

*“when people don’t [know what dyslexia is] I have to explain it to them and it’s really hard to explain... ...Because there’s all different symptoms of dyslexia, like you can be dyslexic with maths, English, anything really”*

(Marie, lines 366-370)

*“It’s like, it doesn’t, it’s not a bad thing it’s like... it’s something that doesn’t make you... like it it’s hard to describe”*

(Jesse, line 216)

This difficulty with explaining dyslexia to others often seemed to stem from their own lack of understanding about what it actually meant to have a diagnosis of dyslexia

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Researcher: *did anybody talk to you about what it actually means to have dyslexia?*

Participant: *No*

Researcher: *So what did you think it meant at the time?*

Participant: *I have err errr I thought I have a disability*

(Walter, lines 548-551)

Due to this lack of clarity and the confusing nature of dyslexia itself, the disclosures participants gave often appeared to leave the people they were disclosing to, unclear about the nature of their difficulties.

Participant: *Some of them had to look it up on the Internet*

Researcher: *Oh did they \*laughs\*? Did you erm did you try and explain it to them at all?*

Participant: *Kind of but err then I couldn't really cos it's hard to explain at the time*

(Gus, lines 266-268)

While no participants reported being unable to disclose their dyslexia to peers, about half of them discussed feeling unable to initially tell their teachers about it, often because they felt they might not be as understanding.

*"Because because like your fr- like the teachers they are there to just like teach pupils and stuff and like help them with their like situations and stuff, and your friends are like understanding, like they stand up for you if you were getting bullied or something like that, and erm so they help you, so I just said why not just tell them, yeah"*

(Holly, line 211)

As such, these participants often left it to the school SENCo or their parents to inform their teachers that they have dyslexia.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Researcher: *Was there other-was there erm was there any teachers that you erm, told that you told that you had dyslexia, or talked to them about having dyslexia?*

Participant: *I think my mum must of did that I didn't do that, I was a bit embarrassed!*

Researcher: *Oh why embarrassed?*

Participant: *I dunno I just, yeah I dunno I just felt a bit embarrassed that I found this stuff quite hard*

(Skyler, lines 147-150)

### **4.5.2 Subtheme 1.3b: Teachers should know when a student has dyslexia:**

Once teachers had been informed, or a disclosure had been made about their dyslexia, the majority of participants felt this subsequently led to positive outcomes for them. Often this related to ensuring teachers knew to not overly pressure participants, such as Holly, who worried her teachers would think she should have higher National Curriculum levels.

Researcher: *would you say that one good thing about, erm helpful for other pupils with dyslexia to do perhaps would be to make sure that their teachers know?*

Participant: *Yeah so then they do not like put pressure on you.*

(Holly, lines 173-174)

Participants generally reported positive outcomes when teachers knew about their dyslexia, including increased support and understanding of the things they might struggle with.

Researcher: *What was their response?*

Participant: *They said okay I'll give you extra help*

Researcher: *And do you think since you have spoken to them, what kind of things have they done for you since then?*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participant: *Erm they done they made erm work more basic for me... ...And more easier for me to do*

(Walter, lines 107-122)

Participants also felt that when their teachers knew about their dyslexia, it enabled them to explain to teachers the aspects of secondary school work they were worried they may have difficulty with.

*“so and if your teacher maybe does not understand, do not feel, you know feel free to say to them like, I might not be able to do as much written work as other people in the school because I find this difficult and they will probably, and if they are good teacher they will understand”*

(Hank, line 253)

**4.5.3 Subtheme 1.3c: Disclosing dyslexia to peers:** It appeared to be equally important for participants that they had been able to speak to their peers about having dyslexia. Often, participants had chosen to tell their friends to make them aware of why they may struggle with certain aspects of learning and school.

Participant: *Erm it made me feel a bit happy because my friends are supportive, because I told them and they were supportive, yeah*

Researcher: *Okay, so what kind of things did you tell them?*

Participant: *Er that I had dyslexia I think because I have like- I got like- it is hard to learn...*

Researcher: *...Okay and what did they- what did they say?*

Participant: *They just say ah that's- that's okay I'll help you if you need any help/ and stuff like that*

(Holly, lines 27-33)

A number of participants remarked that they had told their friends simply because they wanted them to know, or because they felt as though not telling them would be as if they were hiding something important about themselves.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Researcher: *what made you want to tell all your friends about it?*

Participant: *Erm like, they look like they are close friends with me right now, like they like, I always hang around with them so it's like I might as well tell them... ...They are gonna find out one day*

(Jesse, lines 221-224)

While the majority of participants reported telling peers about their dyslexia in relation to positive social experiences, a third of them said they had told peers about their dyslexia in response to a negative social experience, such as a classmate questioning their academic abilities.

*"I've talked to them about it cos they've said why are you so rubbish at reading? And I said, it's not my fault, I'm dyslexic, and they're like, oh... ...They just left me alone"*

(Gus, lines 260-262)

**4.5.4 Theme overview and material development:** Although dyslexia impacted upon participants' transition to secondary school in different ways, all students spoke about discussing dyslexia with others, including teachers and peers. Disclosing dyslexia was an important part of transition as it was often a precursor to academic and social support. However, the experience of making a disclosure was often hindered by the confusing nature of dyslexia and a lack of understanding of their difficulty, as well as feeling uncomfortable about discussing it with a teacher.

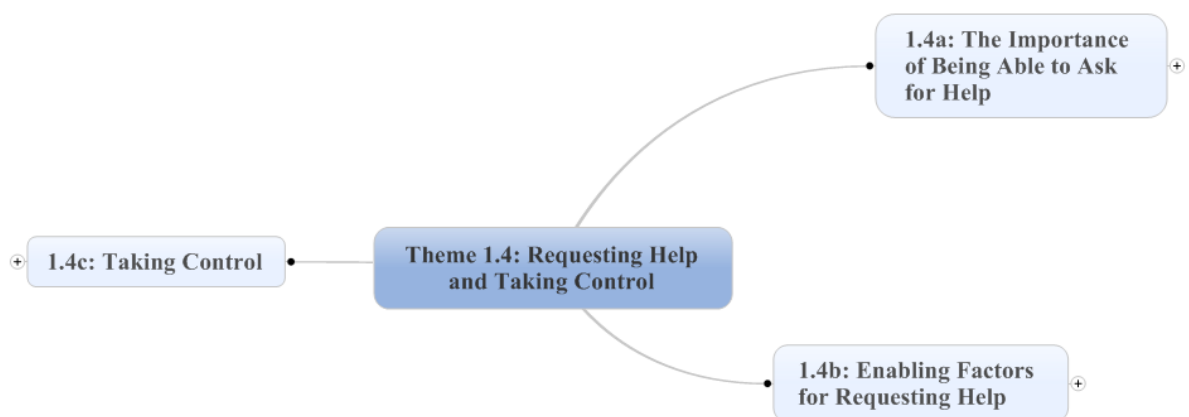
An essential element of self-advocacy relates to understanding and being able to explain one's own difficulty or disability (Test et al., 2005b). The identification of these difficulties led to the creation for the material 'Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia' (Appendix 23). Firstly, this material supports students to better understand the concept of dyslexia, by providing an accessible explanation. This was developed by adapting the language used within recognised definitions (Rose, 2009) and including examples given by participants themselves during their interviews. The material then attempts to consolidate this understanding and support students' ability to explain their specific needs to others through the use of a 'script builder'. Students select and devise sentences about their dyslexia which are used to form a script that students can later refer to when disclosing to others.

#### 4.6 Theme 1.4: Requesting Help and Taking Control

This theme outlines the importance of participants being able to ask their teachers for help, as well as how participants have taken control of their own learning and support. Figure 4.5 provides an overview of this theme.

Figure 4.5

*Thematic map illustrating theme 1.4 and corresponding subthemes*



##### 4.6.1 Subtheme 1.4a: The importance of being able to ask for help:

Participants who were able to request support from teachers found this helped them to overcome some of the things they had been worried about before arriving at secondary school.

Researcher: *So the first thing you told me was about erm being worried about the work of the lessons and having long words to try read and things like that, how is that in reality?*

Participant: *Well it's okay because I get help like, I say I do not understand it and can you do this, can you like help me read it or something like tell me what the word means*

(Holly, lines 143-144)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participants often spoke about it taking some time before they built up the courage to request support from a teacher. As such, some felt opportunities to practice these skills could lead to increased confidence for requesting help.

Participant: *It's only recently that I've gathered up courage to actually say to Mr [teacher's name] about this and I am getting better erm saying, if you are not so confident, don't worry just feel free to do it, because you are not going to get into trouble for doing this, its- there is not going to be a problem for doing this*

Researcher: *Do you think it would have been helpful if erm somebody had taught you some skills or some- given you some chances to practice er being confident about asking for things earlier on?*

Participant: *Errr yeah actually, because I've never, to be honest in primary school I was never really, I I've never not, you know, it has not really been, not really had the best confidence and to er you know to ask people*

(Hank, lines 345-347)

**4.6.2 Subtheme 1.4b: Enabling factors for requesting help:** A number of participants described being deterred from requesting support for fear of being judged by peers, or it being received negatively by teachers. As such, an important factor for participants to be able to request help was a supportive ethos in the classroom.

*"I don't feel like I have to impress people, people like- I don't and then like people they don't- they are really nice to you, they don't judge you as I said and the teachers are like really nice and they make you feel comfortable and where like we are in smaller classes I feel like I am able to put my hand up- say when I need help, and I am with other people that like don't find stuff as easy as I- like as other people like me"*

(Skyler, line 168)

Participants also felt that if their teachers already knew about them having dyslexia, and had a good understanding of the types of tasks they may find difficult, then they felt more comfortable asking for help or requesting the work be adapted to better suit their needs.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“my history teacher Miss [teacher’s name] I mean she is great, she is like, and she understands that I find written work quite difficult so she erm she does not mind like some other teachers do if I do not finish it... ...and then the Spanish... ...we were doing an exam and we had to, and she said we had to rewrite the written work, the written piece we did and correct the mistakes and I did not, she was actually okay with it, and I just corrected the mistakes on the sheet because I was not able to rewrite the whole thing in that time”*

(Hank, lines 144-146)

**4.6.3 Subtheme 1.4c: Taking control:** In addition to asking for help from others, some participants were able to describe times where they were able to take control of their own school experience in order to be successful. One example of this was when participants were able to identify their strengths and think critically about how they could use them to be successful at school. For example, Mike describes how he came to choose media studies as an option, based on what he felt his skills were.

*Participant: And I thought I’d enjoy it [media studies], cos that’s like the sort of thing I’m good at... ...I think if I’m good at it then I could get a good GCSE though it...*

*Researcher: ...So what what kind of things do you have to do that you think your you would be good at?*

*Participant: Umm well like, I’m okay at typing up stuff and writing, but you get to like make like magazines and that. And I’m good at that, like being I’m quite creative like art, I’m quite good at art*

(Mike, lines 456, 462)

Participants also showed the ability to take control over the type of help they received, by voicing to teachers what type of support they felt would be helpful, and what would not.

*“Errrr I would say definitely erm embrace opportunities to help for dyslexia, any help, erm maybe there is one that you think that you do not need that and said do not be afraid, do not then be afraid to say I do not think, you know I do not think I, I do not think I need that, so I will not have that, I am pretty sure that*



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*I do not need that, but maybe that would help, you know pointing out things that you think would help, and do not be afraid to say that”*

(Hank, line 249)

Some participants spoke about ways they have taken responsibility for their own support, such as trying to help themselves succeed by asking for extra work to complete at home.

*“I do ask for like sheets and then me and my mum do it, like my mum helps me”*

(Holly, 237)

Other participants were able to take responsibility for the strategies that had previously helped them succeed in primary school, such as Mike, who spoke about using a coloured overlay which was given to him before he transitioned to secondary school.

*“It was my responsibility not like my mums or anything... ..I had to remember to bring it to school every day... ..and I had to remember to bring it home every day”*

(Mike, lines 48-52)

**4.6.4 Theme overview and resource development:** The majority of participants discussed the importance of speaking to teachers and others about things they were finding difficult or would like some help with. Participants described various positive outcomes from being able to request support, and it was felt to be important that students with dyslexia have the confidence to do so. Participants felt it was easier to ask for help when there was a supportive classroom ethos, and when teachers have a clear understanding of their specific difficulties. Finally, some participants described ways in which they took control of their own school experience. This included the ability to use skills which are often associated with self-advocacy such as; being aware of personal strengths; identifying which support is helpful and which is not; taking responsibility for their own learning and support strategies.

Arguably, the ultimate goal of developing self-advocacy is for students to be able to request support and take control of their own learning (Test et al., 2005b). As such, the subthemes outlined here were subsequently used to inform the material ‘How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me’ (Appendix 24). Firstly, this material

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

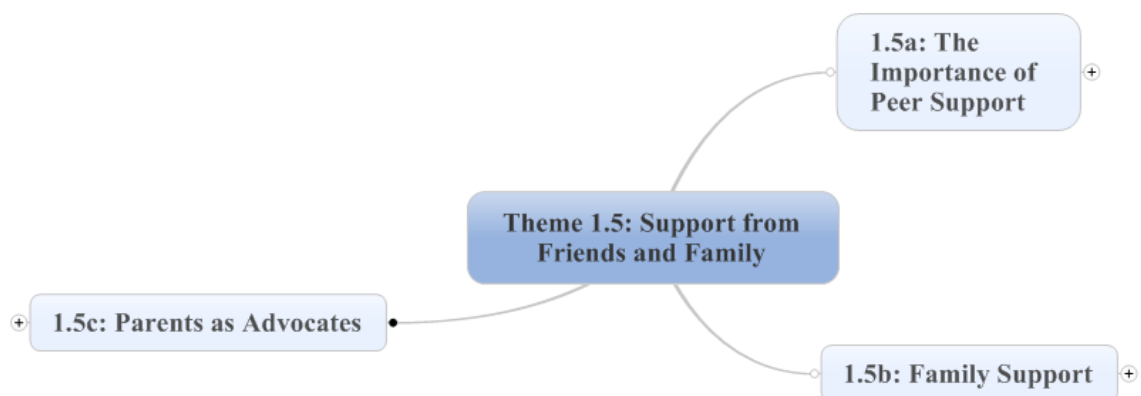
attempts to support students to feel more confident about asking their teachers for help. Students complete a questionnaire and self-scaling measure for various school subjects which helps them to identify their strengths and areas of need. It also encourages students to identify strategies they currently use which enable them to be successful. With this increased self-knowledge, students are clearer about the elements of school it is likely they will need to request help with, as well as strategies they can use themselves in order to self-advocate and take control of their own learning. Finally, students complete a summary page which they can use as a prompt when talking with a teacher, or reminding themselves of their self-help strategies.

### 4.7 Theme 1.5: Support from Friends and Family

This final theme outlines how participants valued the support of both friends and family. Participants explore how this support contributed to the success of their transition, and made them feel more positive about secondary school in general. Figure 4.6 provides an overview of this theme.

Figure 4.6

*Thematic map illustrating theme 1.5 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.7.1 Subtheme 1.5a: The importance of peer support:** Participants often spoke about times where friends could be relied upon for support with various aspects of learning.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“Maths went erm okay as well because like there was like people who helped me as well, like my friends helped me sometimes... ...Like like when sometimes I have questions that I’m struggling on like my friends like help me and sometimes my erm when like there’s feedback... ...And sometimes I can’t even read the handwriting... ....So I just tell my friend can you read that for me”*

(Jesse, lines 190-196)

It was also regularly reported that friends tried to be understanding and accommodative of participants’ difficulties when they knew about their dyslexia.

*“Oh yeah I did tell my friends who were like, okay with it, they were like if I ever need help I asked them and they help me if they know”*

(Holly, lines 193)

Friends also offered help with other aspects of secondary school which participants needed some help getting used to.

*“Umm because my mates were like good at like remembering where all them are, I just asked them and used to follow them... ...And then after like a week or so I knew exactly where they was so then I just made my own way there”*

(Mike, lines 1886-189)

Additionally, one participant who experienced some problems during their transition was given peer support through a mentoring system, which was arranged by the school. This was reported to be an effective means of emotional support and reassurance.

*“[teacher's name] has put me with, er which I think helps, a sixth form person to be my mentor who I can meet up with, I meet up with on Monday registration, Monday registration and er that is helpful, that that is useful, you know that is helpful and I can talk to him about stuff and its, because he was bullied as well when he was, when he came to the school”*

(Hank, line 215)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

When participants were able to build peer relationships, which led to them having higher levels of support, they frequently reported feeling happier in school.

*“Erm it made me feel a bit happy because my friends are supportive, because I told them and they were supportive, yeah”*

(Holly, line 27)

These positive experiences with peers also allowed participants to enjoy secondary school more generally.

*“she [a friend] was really helpful, she showed me around and like where her friend- all her friends were like really nice to me, and they helped me and as I said, they took me to my classes, made sure I was okay, and it was just, it was like really nice and I really like this school”*

(Skyler, line 202)

**4.7.2 Subtheme 1.5b: Family support:** Family members were also an important part of participants' support systems. Participants often turned to family members when they needed emotional support with some of the frustrations associated with dyslexia. Family members were considered to have a unique understanding of these issues, especially when they also had dyslexia.

Participant: *My mum she she knows how it feels...*

Researcher: *...Whys that?*

Participant: *Cause she has it herself*

Researcher: *She has dyslexia herself, okay... ....so what's what's that like having mum feel the same frustration that you have sometimes?*

Participant: *Erm it's I dunno. She knows how I feel that's it*

Researcher: *Mmm is that is that in a way is that quite helpful that she knows how you feel?*

Participant: *Yeah*

(Walter, lines 394-409)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participants were also able to seek support from parents when there was something at secondary school they were struggling to adjust to. Parents tended to be able to give advice, liaise with the school, or in some cases, help participants directly.

*“Umm well in the beginning of school I used to go home earlier and used to do it at like four o’ clock and get help from my mum... ..and that and that made it a lot easier to finish it all”*

(Mike, lines 170-172)

Family members were also able to support and encourage participants' academic progress in their subjects.

*“I think my dad was a mathematician, so he built me up in it [maths] like, like... ..Every now and then I remember a long time about at dinner, he’d be like you have some extra pudding or something if you do, if you work out this problem or something, it would be some hard problem from university or something”*

(Saul, lines 180-182)

**4.7.3 Subtheme 1.5c: Parents as advocates:** There were a number of occasions where parents acted as advocates on behalf of participants. This included instances whereby participants felt unable to disclose their dyslexia to their teachers for reasons such as not having enough confidence, allowing their parents to discuss this with them instead.

Researcher: *Er is there any- have there ever been any teachers that you’ve spoken to about it all has it always been sort of you have asked mum to do it?*

Participant: *I just ask mum*

Researcher: *Yeah is it easier to do it that way round?*

Participant: *Yeah*

Researcher: *Why is that?*

Participant: *Because it is like nerve-wracking like when you- when you are trying to tell the teacher something but there is like other pupils like going over there, so I just found it uncomfortable*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

(Holly, lines 161-166)

Finally, there were also occasions where participants required a parent to request more support for them at school, following having some level of difficulty with secondary school lessons.

Participant: */She come in to school she talk to the head teacher I dunno what she said to the head teacher*

Researcher: *Oh okay but it was, had you said to her you were finding something hard?*

Participant: *Yeah*

Researcher: *Yeah so what was it you said about?*

Participant: *So I told her I told her I said to her, mum I don't get this this this erm er task... ...And I don't get the erm time timetable and then my mum, I told her I don't have no TAs in my classroom... ...My mum my mum told them to give TAs*

(Walter, lines 415-432)

**4.7.4 Theme overview and material development:** All participants experienced some level of support from friends and family during their transition to secondary school. Most participants discussed the importance of their peers whilst adjusting to the demands of secondary school. These relationships regularly featured as a crucial part of participants' support systems, and enabled them to better manage learning, dyslexia related issues, getting used to the school, as well as offering emotional support. When peer support was experienced, participants reported greater enjoyment of school and felt happier generally. Family members also played a key role in participants' support systems. They were seen by participants as being understanding of their needs, and able to offer direct support with issues such as struggling with learning. At other times, family members also acted as advocates, seeking additional support for participants.

Pocock et al. (2002) suggests that an essential aspect of self-advocacy is being able to communicate with and gain support from others. This final theme led to the creation of the material 'Who Can Help With What?' (Appendix 25). Participants clearly

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

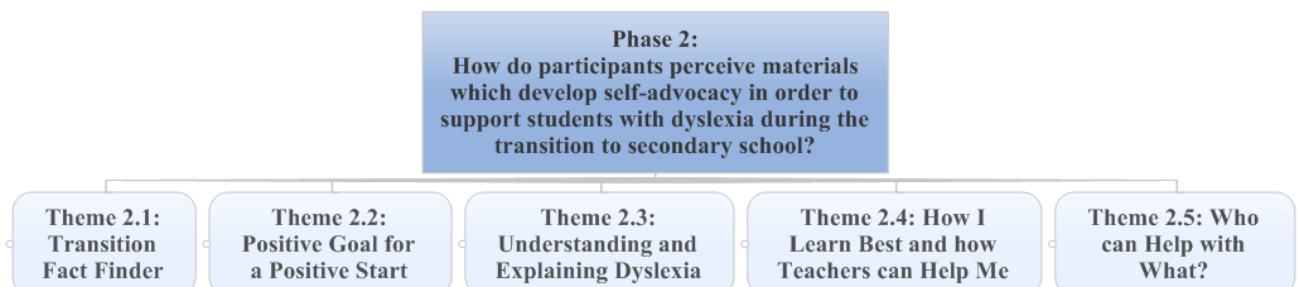
found the support of family and friends crucial in enabling them to have a successful transition to secondary school. As such, this material primes students to identify the various individuals in their lives who can form part of their support network. Students are then encouraged to consider various hypothetical problems they may encounter, and decide which member of their support network may be best placed to help them with this issue. Students are also encouraged to consider which problems they could manage without the support of another person.

### 2.8 Overarching Themes and Subthemes for Phase 2 Data Analysis

The deductive thematic analysis for the phase 2 data generated five overarching themes which encompass 15 subthemes (see figure 4.7). These themes describe the perceptions of participants on five draft materials which were created by the researcher, based on the transition experiences outlined by participants in phase 1. These five materials each draw on self-advocacy techniques to support students with dyslexia during the transition to secondary school. The five materials were systematically presented and explained to participants, before their views were sought about each. It was hoped that this would lead to an understanding of the perceived usefulness of self-advocacy based transition support by students with dyslexia. This analysis provided information about the participants' views which enabled the researcher to develop refined final versions of the five materials (Appendices 26 to 30).

Figure 4.7

*Thematic map illustrating the five overarching themes for phase 2*



### 4.9 Theme 2.1: Transition Fact Finder

This theme outlines the participants' perceptions of the first material, Transition Fact Finder (Appendix 21). Participants discussed what they found helpful about the session, ways to improve it, and when it should be given to students with dyslexia.

Figure 4.8 presents the deductive themes for theme 2.1.

Figure 4.8

*Thematic map illustrating theme 2.1 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.9.1 Subtheme 2.1a: How it could help:** In general, participants felt this material would be helpful because students would gain information that their primary school may not provide. It would also give students an insight into how things such as lessons and homework differ at secondary.

*“Yeah I think that all good because then you’re finding out what secondary schools like because in a lot of primary’s it’s like, oh yeah you’re going to secondary school now, like bye, like/... ...They don’t teach you anything um... ...also I it’s good because when you’re learning about secondary like how with the homework like you in primary you you got homework but it was like, write a paragraph about the story the pages you read and that’s like really simple and then you come to secondary it’s like a good few pages of maths homework... ...English homework... ...And I think this could like help you find out like how the lessons and homework worked”*

(Mike, lines 196-212)



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participants felt that completing this material may make students feel less worried about secondary prior to transition, until they actually arrive when they hopefully realise it is not as worrying as anticipated.

*“I think it would be good because like you can like so you don’t worry as much like, you can do like questionnaires and stuff so like you have like these questions that you can answer... ..And then and then probably when like when you get to secondary it’s like err it’s not that bad... ..As it seems”*

(Holly, lines 301-305)

Some participants noted that receiving the information this material helps students to acquire, prior to transition would be helpful for all students, not just those with dyslexia.

*“It would have been helpful... ..To be fair some of these they, quite a lot of people, so not even not just dyslexic people, like um... So say like, ‘what if I can’t read something’, some people would want to know, even non-dyslexia people... ..basically some of these that, there’d be fine for people, anyone, like other people would want to know/*

(Saul, lines 259-269)

**4.9.2 Subtheme 2.1b: Improvements:** Some participants said they had received some of the information on the questionnaire during their visit to the secondary school. As such, they felt students should take the questionnaire to the school visit in order to answer some of the questions, prior to asking others.

Participant: *Umm there are some questions here that seem a bit kind of, you get it, I got it explained... ..you’re told about, at open day, so it would... ..be good to take off some the questions such as this ... ..or something or for them find out during the day*

Researcher: *Yeah ok, so you you actually see this as perhaps something that they could take with them to their taster day/*

Participant: */Yeah ... ..And and then also be able to ask students and friends around the school*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

(Saul, lines 301-303)

A number of the participants also felt this material should help students to think about areas and aspects of secondary school which they would know very little about and thus might be unable to ask appropriate questions about. This included phenomena such as using a school planner and having multiple subject teachers.

*“Mmm maybe I would like some stuff about, even though they can ask their own questions just give like stuff about how stuff works like, like planners or lessons, how they work because in primary you probably stayed in one classroom, so they should tell you like that you have got different classes, different teachers like maybe like teach them like what like - I remember when I went to secondary school I did not really know how to use my planner, and just stuff like that”*

(Skyler, line 152)

Another idea that was suggested in order to improve this session for students was adding a tick box column. This could be used once students had transitioned to secondary school, in order to see whether the answers they collected were correct, and if not, this would encourage students to seek the correct answer.

*“But like if they could do the answers before and then they come in and then they can see if its right like... ..They can do like a tick box”*

(Holly, lines 347-355)

**4.9.3 Subtheme 2.1c: Timing:** The majority of students felt it would be most appropriate to complete this material when students are still at primary school. In particular, it would be most helpful once students knew which school they would be going to, as they would be able to ask specific questions about their school.

*“I think probably I mean obviously it would be after you know what school you’re going to”*

(Hank, line 385)

However, a small number of students felt it would be better for students to complete this material when they first arrive at secondary school. For example, Jesse who felt it would be better if they learnt about the school through experience.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“Mm like like the start of secondary... ..Because like um because like there they need to like experience like this stuff stuff”*

(Jesse, line 128-132)

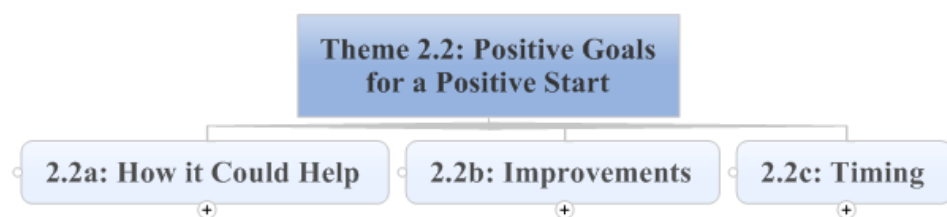
**4.9.4 Theme Overview:** Participants felt that by completing this material, both students with and without dyslexia would have much more information about their secondary school, meaning they would feel less worried about their transition. It was suggested the material could be improved by encouraging students to take the questionnaire when they visit the school, providing information on unfamiliar requirements (such as using a school planner) and by including a tick box column which would encourage students to revisit their questionnaire once they were at secondary. The majority of participants said students should complete the material once they knew which secondary school they would be attending, although a few students felt the questionnaire should be completed at the very start of secondary school. Having heard the views of participants, the researcher has adapted this material accordingly to create an improved final version (Appendix 26).

### 4.10 Theme 2.2: Positive Goals for a Positive Start

This theme outlines the participants’ perceptions of the second material, Positive Goals for a Positive Start (Appendix 22). Participants discussed what they found helpful about the material, ways to improve it, and when it should be given to students with dyslexia. Figure 4.9 presents the deductive themes for theme 2.2.

Figure 4.9

*Thematic map illustrating theme 2.2 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.10.1 Subtheme 2.2a: How it could help:** All participants except one felt this material would be helpful for students with dyslexia. In particular many felt strongly

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

about the importance of highlighting students' strengths both to themselves and their family and teachers.

*“Umm it would make much more better for them ... ..umm be much more better for the parents to understand what’s what what their strengths are and what’s not their strengths and the and the um school”*

(Walter, 266-268)

Participants felt that having an increased awareness of their strengths would help students successfully work towards achieving the ambitions they have for secondary school.

Participant: *Yeah I think it would be helpful*

Researcher: *It would?*

Participant: *Yeah just like being able to like see, like have an idea of how you can achieve what you wanna achieve, like sometimes you think it is really hard like, you will not be able to, you would not be out of put your hand up but like it just shows like if you do, like you can do stuff to help you like achieve the stuff that yeah/ you can just go with*

(Skyler, lines 190-192)

Participants also liked that the students set themselves goals, as opposed to teachers setting them goals. They felt that this would be better as the students would be subsequently more likely to know what they needed to do to be successful.

*“Umm yeah I think it’s good again because when like how you like give yourself a target is not a teacher giving you a target, so when you’re doing like a personal target I I think it would be easier... ..Because then you know what you what you need to do not a teacher telling you what they want you to do”*

(Mike. lines 276-278)

It was also noted that this may increase teachers' awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses, and ensure they provide support which is in line with this.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*Umm because then like their teachers can tell what they're good at and they're not good at... ... So then they can help more with that and less help with that*

(Jesse, lines 174-176)

**4.10.2 Subtheme: 2.2b: Improvements:** Some participants felt this material could be improved by involving teachers. For example, Gus felt it could be more effective if a member of staff from the secondary school had a copy of the student's goals in order to support them with working towards these.

Participant: *the teacher could keep like a tally of the goal and how good you've done it...*

Researcher: *...Yeah that's a good idea so set it before you go then take it in and show your secondary school teacher?*

Participant: *Yeah or show the head teacher of the secondary school... ...Cos they can keep your tally and how you've done*

(Gus, lines 350-368)

Other participants felt that the students themselves should take responsibility for monitoring their goals, and they should be given additional sheets which they could complete upon reaching a goal, allowing them to set new goals once they had been in secondary school for a period of time.

*"Then every every like couple of weeks they could they could give you like a fresh one, well maybe like every couple of months give you a fresh one then you can start doing new goals and then and then you can like keep on like I said repeating it... ...And then it and then you keep on improving"*

(Mike, lines 382-384)

A number of students commented on the length of the strengths questionnaire, and felt this could be off-putting for students. As such, they thought the number of listed strengths could be reduced.

Participant: *I was just thinking that there was a lot of pages*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Researcher: *Yeah okay I agree I think there is quite a lot, do you think that's too many?*

Participant: *Mmm yeah...*

Researcher: *...There's twenty three there how many do you think would be a good number?*

Researcher: *Half of it maybe*

(Marie, lines 285-291)

**4.10.3 Subtheme 2.2c: Timing:** About half the students felt this material should be given in the lead up to transition. This was often because they felt that knowing your strengths and having ambitions could alleviate worries about secondary school.

Participant: *Maybe it maybe earlier actually just... ...After the umm like the day that they are testing it out*

Researcher: *Ok so after the taster day?*

Participant: *Because otherwise you would be worry worrying... ...What's gonna happen then you suddenly find out, wait this isn't going to happen because I've got this [goals sheet]*

(Saul, lines 429-445)

Additionally, some participants felt this material would be best if it was given once students had started secondary school, as this would give them an opportunity to see how they were coping, and what they needed to work towards.

*"Maybe like maybe at the start of year seven, like once like yeah, maybe like a week into it because like or two weeks into it, like just give them a chance or something just like see how they are then yeah, it will just be helpful"*

(Skyler, line 202)

**4.10.4 Theme overview:** In this material, identifying strengths was particularly important for participants and many felt this would make students with dyslexia more likely to attain transition goals that they set for themselves. Participants also felt it was

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

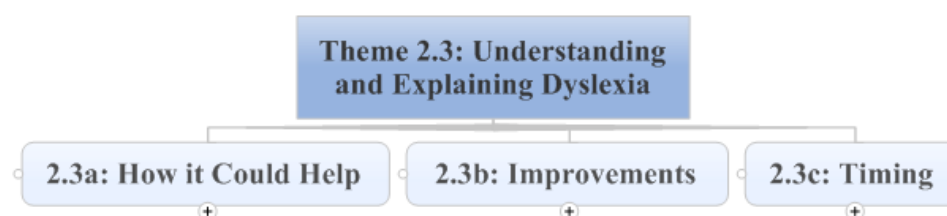
important that students were empowered to create their own goals, rather than them being set by teachers. Participants thought the material could be improved by building in opportunities for students to review their goals, either themselves or with a teacher. It was also noted the strengths questionnaire could be made shorter. Participants were split between thinking this material should be given to students in the lead up to moving to secondary school and shortly after they had moved. Having heard the views of participants, the researcher has adapted this material accordingly to create an improved final version (Appendix 27).

### 4.11 Theme 2.3: Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia

This theme outlines the participants' perceptions of the third material, Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia (Appendix 23) Participants discussed the dyslexia explanation, as well as what they found helpful about the material, ways to improve it, and when it should be given to students with dyslexia. Figure 4.10 presents the deductive themes for theme 2.3

Figure 4.10

*Thematic map illustrating theme 2.3 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.11.1 Subtheme 2.3a: How it could help:** A number of students noted that the explanation of dyslexia in this material was helpful because it was simple and clear, meaning students preparing for transition would be better able to understand their dyslexia.

Participant: *That's good it it explains it in like a simple way not like a really like complex difficult way...*

Researcher: *...Yeah and you think somebody maybe in year six for example would be ok and understanding that?*

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participant: *Yeah 'cause it's just it's just more like straightforward than a lot of things and it is more simple*

(Mike, lines 14-20)

The majority of participants felt the simple explanation of dyslexia accurately represented their understanding or experience of having dyslexia.

Participant: *Cos the first one sounding out words... ..Could be hard... ..And working out problems in maths is hard as well for me...*

Researcher: *...Is there anything there that you think doesn't need to be there... ..Or anything that/... ..You think you need to add?*

Participant: *No... ..Cos my mum's friend's dyslexic and he has most of the problems here as well*

(Gus, lines 24-38)

An important aspect of the dyslexia explanation for participants was highlighting they can have a variety of strengths, in spite of having difficulty with reading and writing.

*"That's good and it is true that like some people are artistic or sporty or computers because I think I'm like quite sporty but even though I'm really rubbish at reading and writing... .. I can do like one thing that I'm good at... ..that doesn't include reading or writing"*

(Holly, lines 40-44)

In general, all participants felt this material would be helpful for students with dyslexia preparing for transition. A key feature identified by the participants was how it could help students to put into words, the things they would otherwise struggle to convey to others regarding their dyslexia. The activities in this material could act as a starting point for students with dyslexia to express their needs once they got to secondary school.



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Participant: *Because like people that might think other things about dyslexia and then but they don't know actually what it is and... ..They judge you and stuff like that*

Researcher: *Ok so you think this might help people having um*

Participant: *Understanding*

(Jesse, lines 42-46)

Participants also felt the session would better enable them to explain the specifics of their difficulties, ensuring people knew this was due to their dyslexia, as opposed to being perceived as being 'stupid'.

*“Erm I think you know it would help people explain like if reasons why you have why I have glasses like this why I my handwriting is terrible... ....Why I can't spell... ....That kind of thing... ....And also without people thinking that you're stupid*

(Hank, lines 108-114)

A number of participants also felt this material could be helpful as it will help students with dyslexia understand they are not the only ones with these types of difficulties and that there are likely to be peers at their secondary school who feel the same as they do.

Participant: *Cos then it means that I ain't the odd one out, that's what most people think when they have dyslexia they think that they're the odd one out... ....And they can't do nothing*

Researcher: *And that would change your mind about that?*

Participant: *Yeah... ....Cos I know other people feel the same as me*

(Gus, lines 94-100)

**4.11.2 Subtheme 2.3b: Improvements:** A few participants also gave some suggestions for making the nature of dyslexia clearer in the example. For example, Hank, felt it was important to clarify that people with dyslexia can read and write, despite facing some difficulties in this area.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

*“Yeah yeah er and also I think maybe something that could be mentioned is how sometimes when I tell people I’m dyslexic... ..They say, how comes you can read, how comes you can write... ..it’s like people don’t really understand it’s not - dyslexia doesn’t necessarily mean you just can’t read and write... ....but it just means you can have had a problem with it you know*

(Hank, Lines 30-46)

Some participants noted some elements of dyslexia they felt had not been covered within the dyslexia explanation or script builder which should be included. This included more specific information about types of reading difficulties (such as with homophones) and information on associated difficulties such as visual stress.

*“I would umm change saying that like, in English I miss a lot of like endings of words or like you know, that or they, like I think it’s... ..T H E R E, but it’s with a Y”*

(Holly, lines 98-100)

*“ohh I think you could mention visual stress because I’ve found quite a lot of other people with dyslexia have [it]”*

(Hank, line 50)

**4.11.3 Subtheme 2.3c: Timing:** All but one of the participants felt it would be most appropriate to give this material to students towards the end of primary school. Often this related to having an opportunity to practice explaining dyslexia with people students would be familiar with, in preparation for them explaining dyslexia at secondary school.

*“Because if you’re in year seven you’ve just gone to the school, like you’re just making friends but in primary you’ve known them forever like they’ve always been in your class... ....So primary... .... Then like I think it’d be easier for you to tell your friends in secondary school because you’ve just told the whole, well all your friends in primary school”*

(Marie, lines 103-115)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

About half the participants also felt that students with dyslexia needed to be given this material and taught these skills soon after they found out about having dyslexia. It was felt students would need this level of understanding and ability to convey dyslexia to others straight away, rather than waiting until transition time.

*“Maybe when you found out about it... ..’Cause like I I I only found about out about that I had this thing in year four, no not year four, maybe year five/six... ..So it would have been useful then if somebody asked, like what’s that thing, sort of thing... ..Then you’d then you’d be able to explain it or something... ..Cause if it if you had a long wait and you wanted to explain something, you can’t because you didn’t understand”*

(Saul, lines 73-83)

**4.11.4 Theme Overview:** Participants were receptive to an explanation of dyslexia that used simple and clear language, and felt this would help students to better understand their needs. Participants were keen that the explanation emphasised the strengths of people with dyslexia, as well as the things they may find difficult. Overall, participants felt this material could support students to be better able to tell others about their dyslexia, explain the specific nature of their strengths and needs, and allow them to recognise there are other students who feel similar to them. Participants made some practical suggestions for improving the material, such as adding some other common difficulties associated with dyslexia. Finally, it was felt students should be given this material at primary school, giving them opportunities to practice disclosing their dyslexia with more familiar people. However, some participants felt students would benefit from the material as soon as it was found they had dyslexia. Having heard the views of participants, the researcher has adapted this material accordingly to create an improved final version (Appendix 28).

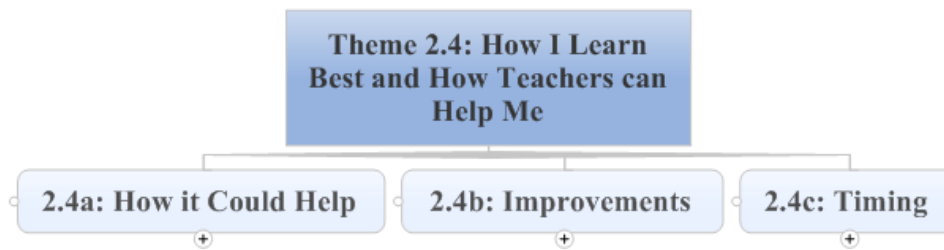
### **4.12 Theme 2.4: How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me**

This theme outlines the participants’ perceptions of intervention fourth material, How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me (Appendix 24). Participants discussed what they found helpful about the material, ways to improve it, and when it should be given to students with dyslexia. Figure 4.11 presents the deductive themes for theme 2.4

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Figure 4.11

*Thematic map illustrating theme 2.4 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.12.1 Subtheme 2.4a: How it Could Help:** Once again, all participants felt the activities in the fourth material would be helpful for students with dyslexia transitioning to secondary school. In particular, they felt it was helpful to have a better understanding of how dyslexia impacts on the different aspects of school, as well as a clearer perception of personal strengths and areas for development.

*“Yeah that’s good... ..Cos it’s like you can know like it’s not a test but it’s showing you what you’re dyslexic at and what you’re better at and what you’re not so good at... ..And erm yeah and then it helps you tell your secondary school teachers and stuff”*

(Marie, lines 155-159)

Participants noted that this increased level of self-awareness could lead students to feel more confident. This would enable them to say to others which subjects they are successful at and which subjects they need support with, or need to work on once they get to secondary school.

*“I think I’d be more sort of confident about what subjects you know about... ..And then again like like with the other one [material 3] it makes you know it would make you know that I’m more confident to say right okay, I’m good at these subjects I think I know and then like the subjects okay I need to work on these subjects”*

(Hank, lines 246-254)

Some participants also felt that having materials which enable students to express how they feel about different subjects to their teachers was important. It was felt

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

this could facilitate a helpful conversation between students and teachers about the areas they need to be supported with and work harder in.

*“I think its good cause like you know how sometimes with the teacher, you feel uncomfortable, you could do this like with a teachers then because then you can they can find out what you’re feeling instead of you having to say it, like writing down it’s a lot easier... ..And plus like when they find out like what you’re good at then they like they they like push you further to do the things that you’re not doing as good at... ..So that they they work harder in them subjects... ..And I think it it could support a lot of children”*

(Mike, lines 132-138)

**4.12.2 Subtheme 2.4b: Improvements:** A few participants’ worried students may under or over-estimate their abilities when rating themselves on the scaling element of the activity. For example, one participant suggested an improvement could be to ask students to complete ratings based on what peers and adults would say about them.

*“Umm maybe this one, you consider yourself to be so somebody might put somebody might consid- like they might think they might want to say that um they’re really high at it... ..When they’re not actually as good... ..So maybe put what your friends would say or something... ..Cause otherwise you otherwise you put what you think you are on then you might put a high higher or lower”*

(Saul, lines 159-165)

One participant felt the material could also be improved by decreasing the amount of writing. Instead of students writing what has helped them previously, it would be better to provide suggested options for students to tick.

*“The only thing I have to say about this is erm it’s quite it’s still reading and writing. So maybe if you had like you said up here like mark on the scale where you think you are... ..Then you could just draw it there and then... ..There could be certain things there could be certain things listed here... ..to tick off... ..It might take a bit more space but I think down on the writing may be good”*

(Hank, lines 190-212)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

**4.12.3 Subtheme 2.4c: Timing:** All but one participant felt this fourth material should be completed at primary school. This was often because they felt the activities would help them prepare for the different lessons in secondary, and students would be ready to speak to their subject teachers once they arrived.

Participant: *Ye yeah mm give it to them in primary school for them to be ready to come ba- to come into secondary school... ...They'll need the prep prep for them to to come to secondary*

Researcher: *Mm ok, so you think umm help help them prep them/*

Participant: *Yeah because basically umm you could get the you could do this like b-before they go to the secondary, they could do the um all this work they could do it and then they could um get all this all together and then when ev ever they go to they will give it to the teacher*

(Walter, lines 152-156)

Some students pointed out that it may be helpful to complete this material in both primary and secondary school, as speaking with teachers at both settings could add different things. For example, Skyler notes the importance of completing it with a primary teacher as they know students better, with the option to complete the activity again with secondary teachers who may have different knowledge.

*“Erm maybe with both, like yeah because your primary teachers will probably know you more so then they are there to help you and then your secondary, secondary teachers will be able to like help you erm do, they will know a lot too but just maybe not as much, like I mean mostly of your primary school teachers, but as well your secondary school teachers”*

(Skyler, line 116)

**4.12.4 Theme overview:** Participants highlighted how this material could help students making the transition to secondary school to understand how their dyslexia impacts on their learning and different lessons. Participants also felt this would enable students to speak with their secondary school teachers about their learning. Participants identified some potential improvements, such as including the views of peers and adults within the scaling process, and ways to decrease the amount of writing involved. It was

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

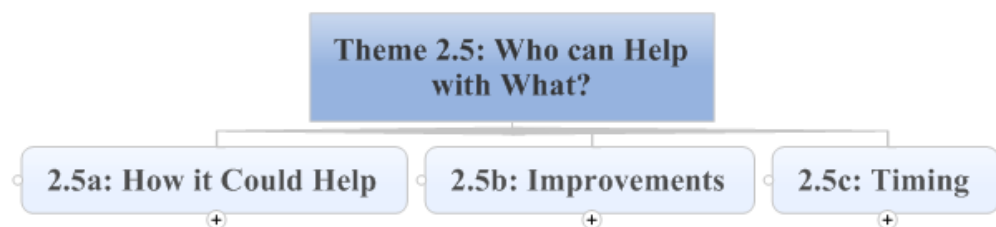
acknowledged that this material would help prepare students for secondary school lessons, and as such, most participants felt students should complete this session in primary school. However, some participants added that it could be beneficial to complete the activity again when meeting with their secondary school teachers. Having heard the views of participants, the researcher has adapted this material accordingly to create an improved final version (Appendix 29).

### 4.13 Theme 2.5: Who can Help with What?

This theme outlines the participants' perceptions of the fifth and final material, Who can Help with What? (Appendix 25). Participants discussed what they found helpful about the material, ways to improve it, and when it should be given to students with dyslexia. Figure 4.12 presents the deductive themes for theme 2.5.

Figure 4.12

*Thematic map illustrating theme 2.5 and corresponding subthemes*



**4.13.1 Subtheme 2.5a: How it could help:** Participants all thought this material would be helpful. Generally, participants spoke about how it could make students feel less worried as they would be more aware of the support they could receive from others, should they experience a problem.

*“it is like so you know that if you do need- if you do experience any of them you know that you can go to like, you know you have people that you can go to like so if you do feel worried about something like they can reassure you that like about it or whatever”*

(Skyler, line 236)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

It was also noted by participants that it would help students to realise the breadth of their support network, enabling them to draw on a wider range of people.

*“I think that’s good because it gives you a variety of like people who you think you who you could talk to cause then normally it’s just, oh yeah you just talk to your teacher, talk to your mum, you you don’t really think about, oh yeah I’ll talk to my friends and I’ll talk to like other like teachers than like your main teacher”*

(Mike, line 394)

Participants felt that completing the activity and outlining the people who can help them would enable students to feel more organised about their support. It also provides a resource to remind students who can help with what, once they get to secondary school.

*“It’s very like you’re basically your make them more organised... ....And they say they they forget very quick then they could they could just look at that um the the the sheet right there*

(Walter, 370-372)

A number of participants felt the material would also enable students to make informed decisions about what issues or problems they could deal with by themselves and which they would need support with.

*“I think it’s good because um it gives them a chance to like think who can help... ...Like in their situations or issues... ...And they can like think like, ah yeah I can maybe do this... ....But then like, oh I can’t do this and then one of these can help me”*

(Holly, 523-529)

**4.13.2 Subtheme 2.5b: Improvements:** One improvement that several students mentioned was to ensure there was additional space for students to write any actual problems that occur, next to the relevant person. In addition to preparing students for



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

transition, this change would extend the material for use with genuine problems or issues that occur for students at secondary school.

Participant: *I would just say like as long as, if you can answer your own questions then that is good but you said you can do that so yeah I think it is fine*

Researcher: *Errr okay see you think erm a space for you to put your own questions*

Participant: *Yeah like if like who, like if you have got questions you wanted to get answered then you can just yeah*

(Skyler, lines 242-244)

Another improvement that was suggested related to participants' desire to initially deal with problems themselves before resulting to asking for support. As Holly suggests, a tick list could be added to the 'myself' section which would encourage students to try to deal with the problems first. If they were unable resolve the problem themselves and tick it off their list, then students could decide who to ask for support.

*"I would only make different like umm is umm you can maybe umm like for yourself [section of session titled 'myself'] like you can write like a little tick list like. So like you don't always depend on like other people, you can always try yourself... ....And then you don't always do it then you can do ask someone else, so you can make a tick list and then... ...Go over your problem again.*

(Holly, lines 548-562)

**4.13.3 Subtheme 2.5c: Timing:** Participants were mostly split between thinking this material should be given to students in primary school, and once they were at secondary school. A number of students felt there could be advantages to both, depending on what kind of problem students were considering.

*"Maybe like through like hehe that is hard, I think it should be like in between like year six and maybe year seven because if you wanna know how to get to school then you can need to know before year seven or like if you want to know like, it just depends on what the question is really"*

(Skyler, line 256)

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Those who said it should be completed in primary, believed this would encourage students to realise they have people in their support network who knew about secondary, which would make them feel more confident about the transition.

*“Cos it’s like letting you know just before you come to secondary school... ..Its erm like once again erm about my sister I chose [to speak to about secondary], like my sisters already gone through secondary school so she knows what it’s like... .. And so you have like advice from your older siblings or something... ..And they’re like they can tell you that it’s alright and stuff... ..And then it boosts your confidence”*

(Marie, lines 429-239)

**4.13.4 Theme overview:** Participants felt that by making students with dyslexia aware of their support network, this material could help them to feel less worried about transition. Participants also thought it was helpful that the material provides a resource students can use to work out what issues they can manage by themselves and who to go to if they require support. Participants discussed several formatting changes to the activity resource which could better enable students to monitor how they intended to overcome a problem or issue. Once again, participants were split between thinking this session should be given to participants directly before or after transition. Having heard the views of participants, the researcher has adapted this material accordingly to create an improved final version (Appendix 30).

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in relation to each of the research questions. These findings are considered in light of previous research as outlined in Chapter 2, as well as the wider socio-political context. Potential limitations of the current research are considered, and this informs a discussion regarding areas for future research. This discussion also outlines implications of the research, and particularly the implications for educational psychology. The chapter ends with reflections upon the research process and the personal learning experiences of the researcher.

### 5.2 Discussion of Findings Linked to Research Questions

**5.2.1 How do students with dyslexia experience the transition to secondary school?** One of the most salient findings was the difficulty participants experienced with disclosing dyslexia to their secondary school teachers. This was found to be due to a limited understanding about their dyslexia, as well as a lack of skills to communicate their specific difficulties to others. This supports the findings of Stevens (2012) who also found participants with dyslexia struggled with the concept of dyslexia and its meaning for them. Both the participants in the current research and those in Stevens' study identified times where it had been difficult to speak with a teacher about having dyslexia. This also supports the findings of Andrus (2010) who identified an important part of the learning process (during a self-advocacy intervention) for a number of the participants was 'disability-awareness'. This involved them coming to more fully understand what it meant in practical terms to have the difficulty they did. Arguably, this lack of understanding could be reflective of the wider context of dyslexia as a concept, including the lack of an agreed upon definition (Pumfrey & Reason, 1991). As has been outlined in earlier chapters of this research, there is an ongoing debate about dyslexia itself and whether in fact there is any validity in such a concept (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014). For some time, this has caused confusion and uncertainty about dyslexia within educational communities (BPS, 1999). Potentially, professionals working with recently diagnosed children and young people may themselves be lacking clarity about the meaning of dyslexia and how this is likely to impact upon those young people. It is particularly concerning if children and young people are being diagnosed

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

with dyslexia without being adequately supported to understand their own needs, given the negative impact it appears to have during both transition to and during secondary school.

Participants were mixed in their experiences of transition prior to moving to secondary school, with some describing this as a time of excitement and others identifying worries and concerns. Participants who described these latter negative experiences often attributed this to a lack of information or clarity about their secondary school. This is in line with the findings of Andrus (2010) who noted that when students with dyslexia feel more involved in the transition planning process, they report being more self-determined once they reach secondary school. These findings highlight the importance of actively including young people with dyslexia within the transition planning process. Ensuring they understand the details of their transition, could potentially alleviate worries and concerns, allowing them to enter the transition process more positively. The notion of young people being more actively involved in their transition planning is very much aligned with the current socio-political context and recent legislative changes. Both the Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2014) outline the need to ensure young people are at the centre of any decisions relating to their SEN provision, support and transitional plans. The experiences of participants preparing for transition to secondary school reported in this research illustrates the need for person-centred culture to move from being an ideology, to being an imbedded practice within transition arrangements.

Once participants had transitioned to secondary school, their actual experiences were much more positive than they had anticipated. Secondary school provided opportunities for them to utilise strengths, and participants spoke extensively about being successful in lessons which were practical, experiential and utilised physical resources. Participants acknowledged they had managed secondary school far more confidently than they had anticipated. This supports the findings of Stevens (2012) who also found that students with dyslexia felt confident about their educational experiences following the transition to secondary school. Similarly to the participants in Stevens' study, participants attributed this to secondary school feeling more grown up, or as one participant, Jesse put it, in secondary school you have 'proper' lessons. This highlights the importance of making students aware of their strengths and helping them to recognise how they can use them meaningfully in secondary school. This is aligned with the ethos of self-advocacy, in that one key component involves becoming aware of

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

your strengths (Test et al., 2005b). This was demonstrated by Merchant and Gajar (1997) who found a high majority of the self-advocacy interventions they reviewed contained an element of understanding strengths and weaknesses.

**5.2.2 What do students with dyslexia currently find supportive in preparation for and during the transition to secondary school, including their use of self-advocacy?** Having a social-support network was very important for participants and this was found to be a crucial source of support for both preparing for transition and managing secondary school successfully once they started. In order to prepare for secondary school, participants often sought reassurance or information from sources they felt had a genuine insight into the challenges they were preparing to face. As such, they showed a preference for speaking with other students or older siblings, as opposed to teachers or school staff. Additionally, having the opportunity to speak with other students who have dyslexia was seen as particularly valuable. These findings could be linked to Firth et al. (2013) who found that participants had increased levels of school connectedness, happiness and well-being, following a transition intervention which incorporated role-modelling from successful people who have dyslexia and opportunities for discussions around dyslexia-related issues within a supportive group. Furthermore, Andrus (2010) noted that participants were better able to engage in transition planning when it was completed alongside their support network. The findings of the current research, alongside that of previous research indicates that young people with dyslexia can prepare for transition most effectively when they are enabled to gain support and reassurance from their friends, family and others with dyslexia.

As was noted above, participants also valued the support of family and peers once they had started secondary school. This included adjusting to the expectations of secondary school, help with school work and emotional support. Related to this, Kotzer and Margalit (2007) found that participant levels of loneliness, social distress and group belonging were indicators of competence. While these findings provide some evidence of the impact of social support on success at secondary school, none of the studies reviewed specifically considered the impact of social support on the success of transition for young people with dyslexia. Yet, by hearing the views of participants, the findings of this research indicate that access to a support network is an important mechanism for transition success. As such, this is one area in which further research is warranted in order to further investigate the efficacy of social support on the transition success for students with dyslexia.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Another finding of the current research was that participants identified having the confidence and appropriate communication skills to request help from their teachers, was important for them to be successful during transition. However, some found requesting help difficult, and it was noted that opportunities to learn and practice these skills may be helpful. Being able to effectively request help from teachers during transition has previously been identified as supportive by young people with dyslexia (Stevens, 2012). The participants in this study also noted difficulties achieving this support when they did not have a good relationship with their teacher, or when they felt their teacher did not know about their dyslexia. While this is the only study to also have explored the experiences of students with dyslexia during transition, other research also supports the importance of being able to request help. For example, Merlone and Moran (2008) found that following a transition programme, participants rated learning how to ask for help as one of most important aspects of the programme and the thing they were most likely to remember and use post transition. Furthermore, Versenel (2006) found approaching teachers for extra help was also a theme following self-advocacy intervention.

An interesting finding of the current research was that participants felt that they were better able to request help when they had been able to explain to their teacher about them having dyslexia and they understood what their difficulties were. The link between students with dyslexia being able to understand and explain their difficulties and being able to request support has been reported in previous research. For example, Andrus (2010) found that participants described getting the support they needed by helping others better understand their difficulty. There was a general consensus that understanding their difficulties resulted in increased comfort in asking teachers for appropriate accommodations. If students with dyslexia feel having the correct skills to request help from teachers is a contributing factor to a successful transition, then first and foremost they need to gain a better understanding of their own needs. Arguably, this highlights the appropriateness for students with dyslexia receiving a self-advocacy intervention, as these are both common learning objectives within such programs (Merchant & Gajar, 1997; Test et al., 2005b). This is particularly pertinent when considered in the context of previous research with young adults with dyslexia, who identified that practicing the use of self-advocacy skills during high school made it easier for them to ask for accommodations from their postsecondary instructors, as well

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

as asking for assistance from a supervisor or co-worker in their work places (Schreifels, 2013).

Another finding was that some participants were able to take some level of control over their transition and school experience in order to be successful. This included behaviours which could be construed as being a self-advocate, for example; being aware of personal strengths; identifying which support is helpful and which is not; taking responsibility for their own learning and support strategies. While it is recognised that there were relatively few reported incidents of participants demonstrating self-advocacy, those who did, described this as a positive experience which led to helpful outcomes, such as receiving the correct type of support. This supports previous research findings which have also found that being able to self-advocate has led to positive outcomes. For example, Walker and Test (2011) found participants rated the use of self-advocacy skills as effective in helping them request accommodations from teachers. Furthermore, Durlak, et al. (1994) found that being trained in self-advocacy skills enabled students with dyslexia to; ask questions of school teachers; disclose their difficulty and request appropriate support; request help from support staff, such as librarians and school counsellors. The findings of the current research and that of previous research suggest there is some potential efficacy in providing students with dyslexia with self-advocacy training in preparation for the transition to secondary school.

### **5.2.3 How do participants perceive materials which develop self-advocacy in order to support students with dyslexia during the transition to secondary school?**

Following the first phase of analysis, five self-advocacy based materials were drafted which sought to address the difficulties experienced by participants during transition. During a second interview, participants were then asked to consider these materials, giving feedback about each.

Overall, participants were very positive about each of the five materials and it was clear from the feedback that that an intervention based on such materials would be helpful for future students with dyslexia making the transition to secondary school. The participants confirmed that the materials covered all the concerns and issues that arose during transition to secondary school (See Appendix 31 for participants' overview of the draft materials). In particular, it was noted that these materials could help students to; acquire the appropriate information about their new secondary school independently;

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

understand and be able to communicate their dyslexia more clearly; request support which is appropriate to their needs; have a better understanding of areas of strength, as well as areas for development; set appropriate transition goals; effectively utilise the support of friends and family. These findings suggest that students with dyslexia would find it supportive to receive a self-advocacy based transition intervention which was constructed using the materials developed within this research. To the researcher's knowledge, this is the only research to have consulted with students who have dyslexia on the types of materials which would create an effective transition intervention. Previous research has sought the views of participants regarding interventions they participated in. For example, Merlone and Moran (2008) found that all but one participant felt the self-advocacy intervention they received would be useful for other students in the future. Additionally, the participants in Versenel's (2006) study reported a number of recurrent themes which were similar to the themes identified in the current research, including; feeling more prepared for the transition; approaching teachers for extra help; identifying new goals; becoming more independent; improved academic performance.

Participants indicated that they would have found it helpful to have the materials given to them while at primary school, thereby offering opportunities to prepare for transition. There were some materials which participants felt would be helpful to continue using once they were at secondary school. Using the materials in this way would fit with the implications of previous research. For example Firth et al.'s (2013) research suggests that interventions administered before the transition to secondary school may prevent students with dyslexia from developing maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Finally, participants were also able to identify a number of content and structural changes to each of the materials which in their view would be more supportive for students with dyslexia. Having analysed the suggested changes, the researcher was able to modify the materials to ensure they reflected the suggested improvements of the participants (see Appendices 26 to 30). A number of overall changes to the materials, which were suggested by participants, were also added in order to make the sessions more accessible as a whole. This included formatting suggestions as well as advisory notes on who they felt would be best to support students to use the materials. Full details of these suggestions can be seen in Appendix 31.



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Currently, there is no intervention or package of support which specifically addresses the transition needs of students with dyslexia. This is of some concern considering previous research which has shown that when students with dyslexia are not adequately prepared for secondary school, they could potentially face a variety of negative academic (Frederickson and Jacobs, 2001; Ott, 1997), social (Burton, 2004; Mishna, 2003), and emotional (Glazzard, 2010; Rose, 2009; Nalavany et al., 2011) outcomes, and that these negative effects can be lifelong (McNulty, 2003). It has also been argued that students with dyslexia are particularly susceptible to the high degree of anxiety and stress associated with transition to secondary school (Zeedyk et al., 2003; Macay, 2012; Galton, et al., 1999; West et al., 2010). Further development of the materials into an intervention programme could potentially go some way to supporting students overcome the difficulties associated with dyslexia and transition outlined above. Although it is recognised that any future intervention would require further research in order to empirically examine its efficacy, it is argued that these materials are solid base from which to build an intervention, given that they were developed alongside students with dyslexia themselves.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Research and Guidelines for Future Research**

The first limitation of the research relates to the sample of participants that was used. Given the qualitative nature of the research, nine participants were interviewed and thus the findings are limited in their generalisability. Additionally, while the participants were recruited from a number of different schools, these were all within one inner-London Local Authority. Therefore, the findings of this research should be interpreted in the context of the policies and practice of one specific authority. That being said, the aim of this exploratory research was not to achieve generalisable findings but was to gain the views of a specific group in order to better understand a particular social phenomenon. The researcher argues this aim was achieved, by providing rich data about the accounts and beliefs of participants who had genuinely experienced this phenomenon. While the findings of this research have led to both implications for improving practice and materials for improving the transition outcomes for students with dyslexia, the researcher accepts that these should only tentatively be applied to students with dyslexia in other contexts. Future research should build on these findings by including a greater number of participants from multiple authorities. It would be possible to explore some of the themes highlighted in this research (such as

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

participants' limited understanding of their own dyslexia and their views on self-advocacy) to investigate whether they apply to students more widely.

Noted above, one outcome of the current research was the creation and refinement of five self-advocacy based materials (Appendices 26 to 30) intended to support students with dyslexia to successfully manage the transition to secondary school. The original motivation of the researcher was to also to develop these into an intervention which could be trialled with year six students with dyslexia, in order to ascertain some degree of their efficacy in practice. This has now become the next stage of this research process. The focus of this present research remained on understanding the young people's issues and creating a solid base for any intervention programme. By interviewing participants on their views regarding the self-advocacy materials, the current research offers some insight into their potential. Yet this can offer only limited information of the actual efficacy of their ability to support students with dyslexia to successfully transition to secondary school. Further research is warranted which investigates the use of these materials with year six students who are transitioning to secondary school. Future research could qualitatively explore students' experiences of transition having received an intervention based on the self-advocacy materials. Additionally, empirical measures could be used to investigate the impact of the materials on academic, social and emotional outcomes, pre- and post-transition.

The current research used semi-structured interviews as the data gathering technique because it would be difficult to gather as rich data in other ways. For example, using questionnaires to collect information from participants would be inappropriate as it would be unlikely to yield data which is as detailed and it would be difficult to create something sensitive enough to be applied to all participants. However, it could be argued that an alternative method of collecting data could have been to conduct focus groups with participants. Focus groups may have been especially advantageous during the second phase of this research as, in addition to being able to ask a set of questions, focus groups would have allowed the researcher to present the self-advocacy materials and enable participants to engage in a group discussion about them (Wilkinson, 2003). Focus groups are often used in this way to become a precursor to the development of a resource (Robson, 2002). However, it was necessary for the researcher to weigh this against the potential disadvantages. For example, when seeking to gain the personal experiences of individuals, focus groups are less likely to yield as in-depth of an insight compared to conducting individual interviews (Wilkinson, 2003).

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Additionally, as the participants were recruited from a variety of different schools, coordinating focus groups would have been difficult, and individual interviews present fewer logistical difficulties (Willig, 2008). Furthermore, it was anticipated that the experiences of participants from separate schools may have differed in some ways, and these subtle differences may have been missed in a group situation. Given that two of the research questions directly related to participants' personal experiences, it was felt that conducting individual semi-structured interviews would provide data which would most effectively answer these. As noted above, there is a need for future research which continues to explore the use of the self-advocacy materials. The use of focus groups could be one alternative way in which participant views about the materials could be researched.

Another design issue, which could be construed as a limitation of the current research relates to the method of collecting participants' views about the self-advocacy materials. Given that the researcher both created the materials and conducted the interviews about them, participants may have been subject to biases such as social desirability when giving their views, meaning they were influenced to speak positively about the materials (Greene and Hill, 2010). The researcher made a number attempts to lessen the effect of these biases. This included adopting an interposal style which encouraged the participants to feel at ease and speak openly about the sessions (Hill, 2010). Additionally, conducting the interviews using a semi-structured and non-directive format made it easier for participants to take some control over the content of the interview (Robson, 2002). Nevertheless it is recognised that, resources permitting, the findings of this research may have greater validity had the phase 2 interviews been conducted by a neutral third-party.

A final point to consider is timing of the interviews, and the need to include both year seven and eight students with dyslexia. The decision was made to include older participants as it was felt that they could provide information on the longer term effects of transition to secondary school. This was felt to be important as the first phase interviews were conducted during the first term of the school year, meaning year seven participants had only limited experience of secondary school. While it was necessary to include year eight students (as there was little flexibility regarding the timing of the interviews, following difficulties with recruitment and the need for the research to be completed within a set timeframe), there were some instances where the year eight participants had difficulties remembering some of the more specific details about their

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

transition. This could have been because for them, this occurred over a year previously. As such, it may be advisable for future research into transition to consider the importance of timing when interviewing students about transition. One approach could be to conduct interviews with year seven students, but over multiple points within the school year, providing a more holistic understanding of the effects of transition, without jeopardising the reliability of the data participants give.

### **5.4 Implications of the Findings**

One of the key findings of the current research was the importance of young people fully understanding and being able to explain their own dyslexia. As was argued earlier, ongoing debates about dyslexia and the lack of an agreed-upon definition may lead school staff and other professionals to be unclear about the term ‘dyslexia’, and how best to explain it to their students. As this is potentially exacerbating students’ lack of clarity about dyslexia, another implication of this research is that Local Authorities should have a dyslexia policy which includes clear and agreed-upon guidance as to how the authority views and understands dyslexia. It would be helpful for all professionals to be aware of this policy in order to ensure that anybody working alongside young people with dyslexia, feel confident to talk about it with them, answer questions that students may have and facilitate conversations about the types of support students feel is most helpful.

This research has found that young peoples’ lack of understanding about dyslexia has implications for the transition to secondary school. However, as a number of participants pointed out, the need for young people to have this knowledge begins when they are very first diagnosed. In the Local Authority where this research was carried out there is a team, The Support for Learning Service (SLS) which offers assessment and intervention support for students with dyslexia. An important implication of this research is that this service should offer a more robust system for post-diagnosis support, which provides young people with the opportunity to better understand what it means to have dyslexia and how they explain this to others. An important part of this post-diagnosis support may be facilitating a conversation between teachers, parents and the young person about what it means for them to have dyslexia and supporting the young person to self-advocate and explain the type of support that helps them.

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

Another important implication of the current research is the way in which young people with dyslexia are supported to make a successful transition to secondary school. There is a wide range of information available to schools and parents regarding transition generally. However, this is the only research which provides specific information about supporting students with dyslexia to make a successful transition to secondary school. It is hoped that an implication of this is that schools are not only more aware of the needs of dyslexic students' transition, but can plan for this more effectively. With this increased awareness, a systematic approach to transition planning for dyslexic students could be taken and transition programs could be offered to students by primary schools or services such as the SLS. Such a program could be based on the materials which have been created as a result of this research.

One finding which illustrates the potential implications of having specific information about the transition to secondary school for dyslexic students, was the importance of peer and family support during the preparation for and the start of secondary school. More specifically, participants highlighted how helpful it was to have opportunities to speak with older siblings and peers, especially those who have dyslexia, as this allowed them to see how other students with dyslexia had been successful. Potentially, part of the systematic approach to transition planning for dyslexic students (suggested above) could be for local schools or services such as the SLS to arrange structured meetings between primary school students with dyslexia and their older peers with dyslexia. This could facilitate constructive conversations between students, allowing them the opportunity to ask questions and gain reassurance from other students who have had the experience of successfully transitioning to secondary school with dyslexia.

### **5.5 Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)**

EPs are often required to contribute to the assessment and diagnosis of young people with dyslexia. An implication of the current research indicates that there is a need for transparency within this assessment process, meaning that the young person understands why and what they are being assessed for. The findings of this research suggest that the outcome of any assessment needs to be clearly communicated to the young person themselves and should be accessible to them. It may also be important for EPs to meet with young people on another occasion in order to further support them to understand the implications of having dyslexia, and what this means in real terms. It

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

may be appropriate for EPs to use resources such as the ‘Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia’ material (Appendix 28) to support young people to achieve this deeper understanding. Furthermore, it may be necessary for EPs to consult with the young person’s parents and school staff in order to reinforce their understanding of dyslexia, in order to ensure the young person has a network of support who are confident to talk about dyslexia.

Another part of the EP role is to consult with schools on systemic and whole-school issues. As a TEP, it has been the researcher’s experience that schools often seek support from the link EP regarding how they support their students to make a successful transition. It is hoped that one implication of this research is that EPs will be more aware of the potential benefits of interventions and materials which support students to develop self-advocacy and how these skills can be used to support students make a successful transition. With greater awareness of self-advocacy, EPs can work alongside school staff and other professionals who facilitate transition planning, and help them recognise the importance of providing students with the opportunity to self-advocate and have their voices heard about what works for them. Furthermore, in Chapter 2 the literature review revealed that very little information is available in terms of self-advocacy training and transition within the UK. Therefore, EPs may even be able to provide schools with training on self-advocacy and the potential efficacy of teaching their students these skills in preparation for transition.

At the current time the EPS in which this research was carried out is continually promoting the culture of person-centred planning in general. This is partly driven by national legislation changes such as the SEND Code of Practice (2014), which requires parents and children to be at the centre of the decisions made about provision and support. However, it is also important for EPs to work using evidence based practice. The findings of this research indicate that students with dyslexia have a desire to be involved within their transition planning process, and felt more successful when they are provided with more information and choices about their transition. Using research findings such as this, EPs can continue to promote person-centred practice in schools by supporting other professionals to see the value of this for the students themselves.

Finally, this research has demonstrated the value of working alongside participants in order to develop materials which are based on genuine participant experiences. It has also shown how young people can have a voice in shaping,

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

redesigning and extending materials which can be used with other young people in the future. When designing resources or interventions, it is hoped that EPs will be encouraged by the findings of this and other research, to work collaboratively with young people in this way. Not only can it be an empowering experience for groups of young people whose voices may not otherwise be heard, but there is also an argument that the resources or interventions being developed are more likely to be something that young people find genuinely helpful.

### **5.6 Dissemination of Findings**

Having met with the SLS at the start of this research project, the researcher has organised a follow-up meeting with this team in order to present the findings of this research. It is also hoped that this will provide an opportunity to discuss some of the implications from this research which have been outlined above. The researcher has also been asked to present the findings of this research at conference in the Local Authority for all primary and secondary schools SENCOs within the Borough. It is hoped that this will provide an opportunity to share best practice with a large number of professionals responsible for the transition planning for students with dyslexia.

A summary of the findings and implications is being sent to schools and the parents of participants who participated in this research. It is intended that schools will use and share this information with their staff, while parents can gain an understanding of how their child has contributed to the outcomes of this research.

Finally, the researcher has also been requested to present the findings of this research to the rest of the EPS in the Local Authority. Once again, it is hoped that sharing this information with EPs will lead to a greater awareness of the transition needs of students with dyslexia as well as the importance of self-advocacy. The discussion will help to ensure that EPs in Local Authority can ensure the implications of this research are implemented.

### **5.7 Self-reflection and Personal Learning**

Completing doctoral-level research has led me to learn a considerable amount both academically and professionally. This process has developed my knowledge about research practice including the importance of selecting the appropriate research design, methodology and analysis in order to answer the questions posed by professionals and

## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

other researchers. It has also helped me to consider my own position as a critical realist, and how this affects my practice as a TEP. Perhaps most significantly, is how this process has impacted upon my approach to qualitative research, and its importance and value in terms of real-world problems. Often, more value is placed on research which empirically tests hypotheses and produces quantifiable findings using large samples of participants. However, this process has helped me to see the value of research which builds on the views of participants who have genuinely experienced the phenomenon being explored. This may be especially pertinent in research which develops or evaluates materials or an intervention which seeks to support a group of people. For me personally, it has been important to be able to say that the materials created as part of this research stem from the genuine experiences of students with dyslexia and have been refined and extended based on their views. It is my belief that using qualitative data in this way has led to a more authentic and targeted set of materials.

Completing this research has also provided experiences which have influenced my practice within educational psychology. For example, as part of the process of completing interviews it was necessary for me to speak openly with participants about the importance of their views, encouraging them to speak freely about what they felt would help other students with dyslexia. Positioning participants as an 'expert' in this way enabled them to think critically about their own experiences and provide potential solutions to the problems they identified. This made me consider the importance of hearing the voices of the young people that I undertake assessments with as a TEP. While I have always tried to capture the views of children and young people, this experience has highlighted the importance and potential value of empowering young people to have a say about their own lives, ensuring that this is at the centre of EP assessment.

I have also valued the opportunity to research an area of both personal and professional interest. As was outlined in Chapter 1, my motivation for completing this research partly stems from personal experiences of dyslexia and the desire to support young people with dyslexia to be successful. While this has been a key motivational factor during a process which was not without its difficulties, it has also been important to be highly reflective about my position within this research. Where possible, I have used academic and professional supervision, as well as a research journal, to help me separate my own views about dyslexia from that of the participants and ultimately, the



## THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA ON TRANSITION

findings of this research. While this presented its challenges, this was facilitated by my desire to ensure the views of participants were accurately represented.

Finally, the completion of this research project has provided me with a deeper appreciation for the importance of practitioner research and its place within educational psychology. As a profession which espouses to be evidence-based, it seems imperative that EPs are actively engaging in research themselves. Furthermore, completing this research project has highlighted the important role EPs can have in linking academic research to the practice in schools and the wider community. In this sense, it seems important that there is an ongoing dialogue within EP services which promotes the dissemination of research findings to schools and ultimately, improved practice for children and young people.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Psychological Theories Underpinning the Reviewed Research**

Research involving dyslexia is inherently underpinned by the theoretical perspectives which seek to explain its causality. There is a substantive evidence base for explanations of dyslexia which relate to the processes required for reading, the most dominant of which is phonological awareness and phonic decoding (Rose, 2009). Furthermore, dyslexia is commonly associated with cognitive deficits including information processing and working memory (Reid, 2011). As such, the most widely accepted model of dyslexia is the cognitive process model (Rice and Brooks, 2004). By accepting the construct of dyslexia as a deficit in cognitive processes, the research outlined in this literature review can be thought of as deriving from a framework of cognitive theory.

It has been suggested that self-advocacy is the behavioural manifestation of self-determination (Miller, Lombard, & Corby, 2007). Self-determination theory is a theory of human motivation which is concerned with the choices people make, without an external influence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is founded on the belief that all self-motivated actions are based on an innate desire to satisfy three psychological needs; competence; relatedness; and autonomy (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). Children and young people who are self-determined have been found to be better able to make independent decisions, achieve their own goals, self-regulate and accept the outcomes of their actions (Madson-Ankeny & Lehmann, 2011). This relates closely to the desired outcomes of being able to self-advocate. Accordingly, it is noted here that self-advocacy and its research base is underpinned by the theoretical position of self-determination.

## Appendix 2

### Table Outlining Systematic Search 1

#### *Systematic Search 1 for Self-Advocacy and Transition*

<u>Key Term</u>	<u>Related Search Terms</u>	<u>Refinements</u>	<u>Number of Results</u>	<u>Notes on Exclusions</u>	<u>Key References Found</u>
Self- advocacy	Self-advocacy or self-advocate or person-centred	Last 20 years  Peer reviewed or thesis only	63	Not related to self- advocacy: 8  Not related to education or transition: 46	5
Transition	Transition or Transfer			Not research: 4	

### Appendix 3

#### Table Outlining Systematic Search 2

*Systematic Search 2 for Dyslexia and Transition Interventions*

<u>Key Term</u>	<u>Related Search Terms</u>	<u>Refinements</u>	<u>Number of Results</u>	<u>Notes on Exclusions</u>	<u>Key References Found</u>
Dyslexia	Dyslex* or specific learning difficult* or specific learning disability* or reading difficult*	Last 20 years  Peer reviewed or thesis only	119	Not related to transition: 62  Not related to dyslexia: 48  Not research: 4  Not in English: 1  Repeat of previously identified research: 1	3
Transition.	Transition or Transfer				
Intervention	Intervention or program * or package				

## Appendix 4

### Table Outlining Systematic Search 3

#### *Systematic Search 3 for Dyslexia and Self-Advocacy*

<u>Key Term</u>	<u>Related Search Terms</u>	<u>Refinements</u>	<u>Number of Results</u>	<u>Notes on Exclusions</u>	<u>Key References Found</u>
Dyslexia	Dyslex* or specific learning difficult* or specific learning disability* or reading difficult*	Last 20 years Peer reviewed or thesis only	20	Not related to dyslexia: 8 Not related to self- advocacy: 7 Not research: 1 Repeat of previously identified research: 1	2
Self- advocacy	Self-advocacy or self-advocate or person-centred				

## Appendix 5

### Details of Key Research Identified for Critical Analysis

#### *Details of Key Research Identified for Critical Analysis*

<u>Number</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Authors</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Research Title and Journal</u>
1	Self-advocacy and transition	Merchant and Gajar	1997	A review of the literature on self-advocacy components in transition programs for students with learning disabilities. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 8(3), 223-231.
2	Self-advocacy and transition	Walker and Test	2011	Using a self-advocacy intervention on African American college students. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 26(3), 134-144.
3	Self-advocacy and transition	Merlone and Moran	2008	Transition works: Self-awareness and self-advocacy skills for students in the elementary learning centre. Teaching Exceptional Children Plus, 4(4), 2-10.
4	Self-advocacy and transition	Kotzer and Margalit	2007	Perception of competence: risk and protective predictors following an e-self-advocacy intervention for adolescents with learning disabilities. European Journal of Special Needs Education, 22(4), 443-457.
5	Self-advocacy and transition	Versnel	2006	Self-advocacy for the transition of early adolescence to junior high school. (Doctoral dissertation): Retrieved from ProQuest, (AAIR05241).



<u>Number</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Authors</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Research Title and Journal</u>
6	Dyslexia and transition	Stevens	2012	Children's experiences of dyslexia and transition. (Doctoral dissertation): Retrieved from Hydra, (HULL:6340).
7	Dyslexia and transition	Firth, Frydenberg, Steeg, and Bond	2013	Coping successfully with dyslexia: An initial study of an inclusive school-based resilience programme. DYSLEXIA, 19(2), 113-130.
8	Dyslexia and transition	Andrus	2010	Understanding self-determination and transition: High school students' perspectives. (Doctoral dissertation): Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAI3427783).
9	Dyslexia and self-advocacy	Schreifels	2013	Self-advocacy from the perspective of young adults with specific learning disabilities during the transition process. (Doctoral thesis): Retrieved from ProQuest. (3565372).
10	Dyslexia and self-advocacy	Durlak, Rose, and Bursuck	1994	Preparing high school students with learning disabilities for the transition to postsecondary education: Teaching the skills of self-determination. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 27(1), 51-59.

## Appendix 6

### Research Information for Schools

“The views of dyslexic students on the transition to secondary school”

My name is Sam Kelly and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, working for the London Borough of ..... and studying at the University of East London. As we discussed, I would like to invite seven and year eight students with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia to take part in a research study which will explore their experiences of transitioning to secondary school.



The involvement of dyslexic students who have already made the transition to secondary school is important, as it will give them the opportunity to have a voice about this experience, to help identify the things that helped them with transition and the things that could be done better in the future to prepare other students with dyslexia. Please read over the following information carefully as it outlines why this research is being carried out and what it will involve for you as a school. You may wish to discuss this information with other colleagues.

#### 1. Why is this research being done?

Previous research has suggested that young people with dyslexia may find the experience of transition to secondary school difficult. By completing this research project I hope to help professionals better understand this difficulty, by speaking with students directly. By listening to their views, it is hoped that a materials can be developed that can be used with future students in order to prepare them more effectively for the experience of transition.

#### 2. What pupils can take part in the study?

I am looking to work with year seven and eight students, who have been given a formal diagnosis of dyslexia by either an Educational Psychologist, through the Support for Learning Service, or by another qualified professional. Students should have transitioned from a UK primary school.

### 3. What will the research involve?

- I will provide the school with consent forms which I will ask you to send to parents.
- Following the return of these forms, I will arrange to meet up with the students for a short informal chat to explain my research to them, answer any questions they might have and gain their written consent.
- If the young people agreed to work with me, I will meet with them at the school's convenience on two occasions to conduct two interviews lasting about an hour each.
- I will ask questions about their experience of coming to secondary school and gain their views about the materials I develop to support future students with dyslexia.
- When I hold the interviews, I will record what students say using an audio recorder. The only time I would break confidentiality is if they tell me something that puts themselves or somebody else in danger.
- If one of the students becomes upset when talking about their experience, they will be able to stop straight away. I will ensure to spend individual time with them to ensure that they are okay.

### 4. What will you do with the information once it has been collected?

- First of all, I will change all the student details so nobody can be identified.
- I will then look for patterns in what all the students said in order to gain a clearer understanding of their experiences of transition and what they think might be helpful in the future.
- Using these patterns, I will develop materials which will hopefully help future students with dyslexia transition to secondary school.
- I will also send students and the school a summary of my findings.

### 5. What if I have more questions?

If you have any further questions, or you wish to discuss the details of this research then please contact Sam on:

Email:

Phone:

## Appendix 7

### Head Teacher Consent Form

This is the consent form for Head Teachers to complete if you are happy for Sam Kelly, Trainee Educational Psychologist to carry out this research project with students in your school. Please make sure you read all the details below before signing and dating the form at the bottom. Please return this form using the internal mail system and envelope provided.

1. I have read the attached information about the research project and I understand what it is about.
2. I am happy for year seven and eight students with dyslexia to talk to be interviewed by a Trainee Educational Psychologist, in order to talk about their experiences of coming to secondary school.
3. I understand that the Trainee Educational Psychologist will meet with students on two occasions, lasting a total of no more than two hours.
4. I understand that students will be recorded using an audio device.
5. I understand that all information will be kept confidential unless there is a concern about the safety of a student.
6. I understand that any details that could be used to identify students will be taken out of the write-up.
7. I agree that the information gathered by the Trainee Educational Psychologist might be used to inform the development of a school intervention.

Name	Signature	Date

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the research project. I look forward to working with the students in your school in the near future.

## Appendix 8

### Accessible Research Information for Participants

#### **This sheet gives you some information about a research project happening in your school**

Dear (student name)

My name is Sam and I work in lots of different school in ..... This is me →



I also go to university because I am training to become an Educational Psychologist. This might sound fancy, but really we just try to help schools to get better at working with children and young people!

Before I can finish my training, I have to do a project about young people. I have chosen to do my project on year seven and eight students with dyslexia, and how they found the experience of coming to secondary school. I have chosen to do this because I have dyslexia myself, and I found secondary school quite difficult. So, I want to find ways to make it easier for young people, by asking you what you think.

**With your help I want to find out about:**

- How it feels before you get to secondary school
- What it was like when you first started secondary school
- What it is like being a year seven/eight now
- I also want to show you some materials which might help other students coming to secondary and I want you to tell me what you think of them

**If you want to be part of this project, this is what will happen:**

1. I will be coming into school for a short 20 minute chat about what it is we will do together, and I will answer any questions you might have. I will also need you to sign a form that says you are happy to take part in my project.
2. When the project starts, I will then arrange to meet you so I we can complete an interview together. This will be in school, in a classroom that you already know.
3. We will talk for roughly 1 hour about all the things I want to find out about.
4. We might look at some activities together and I want you to tell me if you think they are would have been good when you came to secondary school.

**What else do you need to know?**

- When we talk in interview, I will record us with a tape recorder so that I can remember what you said. If you are not sure about this, we could talk about it in the first meeting.
- I will not tell others what you said in the interview. The only time I would have to speak to anybody else, is if you tell me something that I think means that either you or somebody else might be in danger.
- Once I've spoken to other young people about the same things, I will write about what I found. However, I will not use your real name so that nobody knows what you said.

**What to do next:**

I very much hope you are interested in taking part in this research as you are the experts about what students with dyslexia need. However, if you do not think that you want to take part in this project that is fine.

If you are interested, please talk to ..... and they will let me know.

If you are not sure yet, do not worry! When I come to see you we can talk about my project a bit more before you make a choice.

**Thanks for taking the time to read this, and hopefully I will see you soon!**

## Appendix 9

### Research Information for Parents

“The views of dyslexic students on the transition to secondary school”

Dear (parent/carer name),

My name is Sam Kelly and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in Training, working for the London Borough of ..... and studying at the University of East London. You may or may not have met an Educational Psychologist before, but in case you have not; their role is to help schools to find the best ways to support children and young people to learn in school by working with school staff, students and parents.



You have been sent this information because I will be working in ..... School in the near future and I would like to invite year seven and eight students to take part in a research study, which will explore their experiences of coming to secondary school. The school have informed me that your son/daughter has previously been given a diagnosis of dyslexia, thus with your permission I would very much like them to be part of my research. The involvement of students with dyslexia who have already made the transition to secondary school is important, as it will give them the opportunity to have a voice about this experience and the things that could be done in the future to better prepare other students with dyslexia.

Should you be willing to allow your son/daughter to take part in my research you will need to sign the parental permission slip attached to this letter. Before doing this, please read over the following information carefully as it outlines why this research is being carried out and what it will involve. You may wish to discuss this information with the school SENCo, (name).

#### 1. Why is this research being done?

Previous research has suggested that young people with dyslexia may find the experience of transition to secondary school difficult. By completing this research project I hope to help school and parents better understand this difficulty, by speaking with students directly. By listening to their views, it is hoped that a materials can be developed that can be used with future students in order to prepare them more effectively for the experience of transition.



## **2. What will the research involve?**

- I will arrange to meet with your son/daughter for a short informal chat to explain my research to them, answer any questions they might have and gain their written consent.
- If your son/daughter agrees to work with me, I will meet with them at the school's convenience on two occasions to conduct two interviews lasting about an hour each.
- I will ask questions about their experience of coming to secondary school and gain their views about materials I develop to support future students with dyslexia.
- When I hold the interviews, I will record what students say using an audio recorder. The only time I would tell teachers or parents what they say is if they tell me something that puts themselves or somebody else in danger.
- If your son/daughter becomes upset when talking about their experience, they will be able to stop straight away. I will ensure to spend individual time with them to ensure that they are okay.

## **3. What will you do with the information once it has been collected?**

- I will change all of your son/daughter's details so they cannot be identified.
- Using the things they tell me, I will develop materials which will hopefully help future students with dyslexia transition to secondary school more effectively.
- I will also send you and your son/daughter a summary of my findings.

## **4. What if I have more questions?**

If you have any further questions, or you wish to discuss the details of this research then please contact Sam on:

Email:

Phone:

## Appendix 10

### Parent Consent Forms

This is the consent form that parents need to complete if they wish their son/daughter to take part in the research project. Please make sure you read all the details below before signing and dating the form at the bottom. Please return this form using the prepaid envelope provided, or alternately, please pass to the school SENCo who will forward it to me.

1. I have read the attached information about the research project and I understand what it is about
2. I am happy for my son/daughter to talk to a Trainee Educational Psychologist within in order for them to tell me their experiences of coming to secondary school.
3. I understand that my son/daughter will be recorded using an audio device
4. I understand that all information will be kept confidential unless there is a concern about the safety of a student
5. I understand that any details that could be used to identify your child will be taken out
6. I agree that the information gathered by the Trainee Educational Psychologist might be used to inform the development of materials to help future students with dyslexia transition to secondary school.

Name	Signature	Date

Thank you very much for agreeing to let your son/daughter participate in the research project. I look forward to working with them in the near future.

## Appendix 11

### Participant Consent Form

**This is the sheet you must complete if you wish to take part  
in my research project**

If you want to take part in my research then please read this form carefully and sign it at the bottom. We can work through it together.

1. I have seen the information about the project and I understand what I have to do.

Yes

☐

No

☐

2. I am happy to talk to Sam during an interview, in order to tell him my experiences of coming to secondary school.

Yes

☐

No

☐

3. I understand that I will be recorded using a tape recorder.

Yes

☐

No

☐

4. I understand that Sam will not tell anybody the things I say unless he is worried about my safety or the safety of another pupil.

Yes

☐

No

☐

5. I understand that my name will be changed so people do not know the things I said

Yes

☐

No

☐

Name	Signature	Date

Thank you very much for agreeing to be part of my research project. I look forward to working with you soon.

## **Appendix 12**

### **Phase 1 Interview Guide**

(Please note the researcher did not intend to ask every question outlined here, but it was hoped that by asking some of the following, all areas of interest would be covered).

#### **Experiences of transition during primary school**

1. When you were in primary school, how did you feel about the move to secondary school?
2. Was there anything you were excited about?
3. Were there any things that you felt worried about?
4. Did having dyslexia impact you during this time?
5. Did your primary school teachers do anything that helped you with the move to secondary school?
6. What did you do if you had a concern about moving to secondary school?

#### **Experiences of transition once attending secondary school**

7. How did you feel when you first started secondary school?
8. What did you do if you had a problem during this time?
9. Was there anything hard about starting secondary school?
10. How did having dyslexia impact on this experience?
11. When there are things you find difficult, can you tell teachers what you need to make it easier?
12. Have you been able to talk to your teachers about the ways you like to learn?
13. Have there been any positive things about starting secondary school?

#### **Overarching reflections on the experiences of transition to secondary school**

14. Was there anything you did that made this experience easier for you?
15. Is there anything that you had in primary school that you wish you still had in secondary?
16. How did the things you were worried/excited about before you transferred, compare to your actual experience of starting secondary school?
17. Is there anything think you think it would be important for year six pupils with dyslexia to know about the transition to secondary school?

## **Appendix 13**

### **Phase 2 Interview Guide**

1. Introduce and explain session
2. What are your views about this material?
3. Would having a material like have been helpful?
4. How could it be improved or how should it be different?
5. How should it be completed, for example, who with and when?

(Complete same questions for each session)

6. Are there any other things you think it would be helpful for students with dyslexia to do in order to prepare for secondary school?
7. Out of the 5 sessions, which of them do you think would be most helpful and why?

## Appendix 14

### Example of a Coded Transcript

I	Interviewer
P	Participant
...	(three full-stops) Unfinished utterance
[xxx]	Anonymised name (e.g. school, participant, teacher, other young people)
<i>Italics</i>	Used where words are emphasised
/	Interruption or overlap
*word*	Information added to aid reading
<inaud>	Inaudible

### Transcript 9 (Brown) Holly

Line Number	Speaker	Verbatim Transcript of interview	Code
1.	I	So like like I said a minute ago we'll talk about primary school to begin with and what it was like perhaps when you was in wear six and your were thinking about what secondary school might be like erm and how you felt, so perhaps we could start with that	
2.	P	Okay erm, when I was in primary, year 6 I found it quite hard 'cause I was like, always in the bottom set so I f... And every time the teacher said something it sounded like really hard to do and I had to like have a couple of goes until I can actually do it so yeah	773 found primary school hard because always in the bottom sets  774 hard to do what the teacher was asking and needed several goes
3.	I	Okay so er year six was quite hard because a) you felt like you were always in the bottom set	
4.	P	Yeah	
5.	I	b) you felt like it took you a few goes before you understood something	
6.	P	Yeah	
7.	I	And that worried you because...	
8.	P	Yeah it was difficult, like everybody understood except for me	775 everybody at primary understood the work except you
9.	I	Okay that is how it felt at the time, that is not nice	
10.	P	Yeah	
11.	I	Okay erm so did your teachers to anything to help you?	
12.	P	Yeah we had erm there was this erm teacher from the secondary school and she used to come in and do lessons with me/ may be like once a week	776 weekly additional support at primary school
13.	I	/Okay	
14.	I	Was that from the secondary school that you are going to, or or just a different secondary school?	
15.	P	erm a different secondary school I think, yeah	
16.	I	Okay, so it was not to do with your move to secondary school it was to help you with learning?	
17.	P	Yeah	
18.	I	Okay and what sort of things did she she do with you?	

19.	P	Erm like puzzles, words erm where you had to spell something cover it, and then spell it again to see if you got it right, yeah that sort of thing	777 support with spelling at primary school
20.	I	Oh I see okay, erm and was that helpful?	
21.	P	Most of the time it was but like the the erm hard words I could not really spell so, the easy words were easy to do	778 spelling intervention mostly helpful, but some spellings were hard
22.	I	Okay so some bits were easy some bits were hard?	
23.	P	Yeah	
24.	I	And when you went back into class afterwards, did you feel like some of that stuff helped or?	
25.	P	Yes, some of it did yeah	779 intervention at primary was helpful
26.	I	Good and how did it make you feel about your lessons in general, because you told me that you are quite worried about...	
27.	P	Erm it made me feel a bit happy because my friends are supportive, because I told them and they were supportive, yeah	780 friends' support made you feel happier
28.	I	Okay, so what kind of things did you tell them?	
29.	P	Er that I had dyslexia I think because I have like- I got like- it is hard to learn	781 friends were supportive when telling them about dyslexia  782 dyslexia means it is hard to learn
30.	I	Yeah yeah	
31.	P	Yeah	
32.	I	Okay and what did they- what did they say?	
33.	P	They just say ah that's- that's okay I'll help you if you need any help/and stuff like that	783 friends offering to help when they were told about your dyslexia
34.	I	/ah that is really nice	
35.	I	And did they do anything to help you after that?	
36.	P	Yeah they helped me with some spellings and like because most of my sentences don't make sense when I am writing it, so mak... they helped me make it sense	784 friends helped with spelling and writing when they found out about your dyslexia
37.	I	That is really nice	
38.	P	Yeah	
39.	I	So that was in year six?	
40.	P	Yeah	
41.	I	So in year six you had some help from teachers but also it sounded like he had help from your friends as well	
42.	P	Yeah	
43.	I	Oh and so that was quite a nice thing to have?	
44.	P	Yeah	
45.	I	And then when, when it was leading up to the time that you were thinking about having to move to secondary school, what were you thinking about moving?	
46.	P	Worried, like the lessons are gonna be hard and I will not be able to complete like the tasks and stuff	679 worried that lessons at secondary school will be hard  785 worried you would be unable to complete work at secondary
47.	I	Yeah okay. And what made you think that they might be quite hard?	
48.	P	Er 'cause science you have like those words like the scientific words	786 worried about lessons in secondary school which have scientific words



49.	I	Yeah the really long ones?	
50.	P	Yeah, and it's- and like er um the science thing where you have to do like acid or something	
51.	I	Yeah	
52.	P	Yeah	
53.	I	So there were some things that you thought, particularly because you struggle with long words and reading those sorts of words that that might be hard to manage and stuff?	
54.	P	Yeah	
55.	I	So one worry was about the work and how hard it might be, particularly related to your dyslexia, er anything else that you are thinking at that time?	
56.	P	Errr that I would not make any friends like as much friends as I got now, which is quite a few	787 worried about not being able to make many friends  788 worried about moving to secondary and losing peer support
57.	I	Good okay but at the time you were thinking oh I've got lots of friends but actually when I move to secondary school it might not be the same?	
58.	P	Yeah	788 worried about moving to secondary and losing peer support
59.	I	Yeah especially as it sounds that they were quite nice helpful friends and they were supportive for you	
60.	P	Yeah	
61.	I	Yeah okay. Did you know anybody that was coming to the same school as you?	
62.	P	No	789 not knowing anybody prior to transition
63.	I	So you were completely on your own?	
64.	P	Yeah	
65.	I	Oh no, that is scary isn't it?	
66.	P	Yeah hehe	
67.	I	Hahaha, okay so yeah that is a bit of a worry. So two two worries, one was the work, one was friends erm anything else that you are thinking about in terms of coming to secondary school?	
68.	P	No not really haha	
69.	I	Was there anything that you are quite looking forward to maybe?	
70.	P	Err making new friends may be, like and having the same lessons as them so I am not on my own	790 looking forward to making new friends  791 looking forward to being in the same lessons as friends and not being alone
71.	I	Oh I see because/	
72.	P	/Without any friends yeah	
73.	I	You were in the sets where your friends were not in were you before?	
74.	P	Yeah	
75.	I	Ahhh okay	
76.	P	Well now I am not because in English and geography and history I am not with the same group... set as my friends because they are in higher sets, and I am in the lower set for yeah	792 now in some lessons with friends but not others
77.	I	Okay but you get to see them?	
78.	P	Yes I have got a few lessons with them	792 now in some lessons with friends but not others

79.	I	Okay good excellent. So, there was one- one thing that you were excited about, anything else?	
80.	P	No, I cannot think	
81.	I	That is okay that is all right, it is quite a long time ago now is in it hehe. So there were a couple of things that you were worried about, one thing you were excited about erm and so how much did you know about your secondary school, had you come to do any visits or?	
82.	P	Oh yeah we had like a student visit thing where you done a little taster of what you would be doing like science and music	793 opportunity for a taster day where you get to try some of the lessons you will be doing
83.	I	Sure was that you come into the school?	
84.	P	Yeah	
85.	I	Or them coming to you?	
86.	P	No we came to them	
87.	I	Okay so they- who sort of showed you around and what did you do?	
88.	P	We were put in groups so like year seven- last year we were just in one class so we did not move, we did not have different lessons, we all have the same lessons so- and now we are just split into sets like people that need help more yeah	794 taster day gave an example of having to move round the school for different lessons
89.	I	Okay, so was it quite helpful to have a bit of a taster of what it would be like?	
90.	P	Yeah because then I made new friends when I was there so when I went to school I felt... when the first day of school came I found my friends and then we bond, we made a good friendship	795 helpful to have a taster day because you made new friends, which helped on the first day of school as you knew some people
91.	I	That is good, okay so already you already slightly less worried because you had met somebody on the taster	
92.	P	Yeah	796 less worried on first day as knew some people
93.	I	And when you were at primary school still, erm did your teachers there tell- do anything to get you ready to secondary school or help you think about what it might be like or?	
94.	P	I do not think so	797 teachers in primary school did not help you understand what secondary school would be like
95.	I	No?	
96.	P	No	
97.	I	Okay do you feel like you had enough information, or were there are things you were a bit unsure about	
98.	P	I think I had enough information about- yeah	798 taster day provided enough information about secondary school
99.	I	Yeah okay good. So, you kind of knew what the lessons will be a little bit like, because of the taster day	
100.	P	Yeah	
101.	I	And things like that, so that helped	
102.	P	Yeah	
103.	I	Okay good erm and was there anything you were worried about leaving behind? Any sort of things that teachers did view all helped you with?	
104.	P	No, no not really hehehe	671 not worried about leaving anything behind in primary school
105.	I	Okay so you sort of ready hehehehe	
106.	P	Yeah	

107.	I	Okay good erm so, you have your summer holidays and you are thinking about secondary school and the day finally arrives when you come, what was that first week like?	
108.	P	Er it- it was nervous like you have like cramps in your tummy but you get used to it like, second week you are used to it already	799 nervous at first day of school, cramps and stomach  800 get used to secondary school by second week
109.	I	Okay so it did not take too long for you to stop being nervous?	
110.	P	Yeah	
111.	I	So what was that first week like particularly then what kind of things were you...	
112.	P	I was scared of erm when I was like spelling like somebody would be like looking over me and start laughing and stuff so that like kind of put me off	801 scared of spelling something incorrectly and a peer would see and start laughing
113.	I	Yeah okay. Is that something that worries you quite a lot that people might...	
114.	P	Yeah yeah	
115.	I	Okay so was there anything that you could do to kind of get round that or anything that you tried to do?	
116.	P	I did I just let them look at it and I did not care what their opinion was, it was there opinion so yeah	802 deciding not to care about peers' opinions of poor spelling
117.	I	That is a good way of looking at it	
118.	P	Yeah	
119.	I	And did anything like that happen or was it just you being	
120.	P	Well they did but they did not laugh they were just like, okay about it I guess	803 peers did notice things spelt incorrectly but were actually okay about it
121.	I	Ah okay	
122.	P	Yeah	
123.	I	And so once that happened how did you feel about it then?	
124.	P	Err okay yeah	804 felt okay once peers had seen spellings and not laughed
125.	I	Hehehe good, alright then, erm and anything else about first week that was- that you particularly remember	
126.	P	Errrrm no not really, it is ages ago	
127.	I	Yeah is a long time ago isn't it. So what- was there any- do you remember anyone or or or doing anything when you had a bit of a problem or if you were worried about some think, was there anyone that you-	
128.	P	Ah yeah when we had like this presentation we had to do and I did- I didn't know this word in I did not want to speak, so I did not do it, I was like no, no thanks I am good/I'll let the others do it	805 reluctant to speak in presentation due to not knowing a word
129.	I	Hehehe hehehe and what did your teacher say?	
130.	P	Oh he was like you have to do, I was like, no thanks, I was like I will do the slide but I am not talking	806 telling teacher that you do not want to complete presentation
131.	I	Sure	
132.	P	Yeah	
133.	I	Did you get away with not having to do it?	
134.	P	Yeah I did	807 able to convince teacher to allow you to not complete presentation

135.	I	And was you- what what did you say that you- why you did not want to do it?	
136.	P	I just said I was nervous and I did not want to speak in front of the class, and the teacher was like fine, just sit	808 able to explain to a teacher why you are unable to complete a piece of work
137.	I	Okay	
138.	P	Yeah	
139.	I	So it was not too bad then?	
140.	P	Yeah	
141.	I	What about erm was there any other- were there any other teachers here that are quite helpful to talk to or anything like that?	
142.	P	Errrrm I am not actually quite sure	
143.	I	That is alright, no problem okay. So so now you are here then, comparing what it is actually like to what you were worried about, how- how does that compare? So the first thing you told me was about erm being worried about the work of the lessons and having long words to try read and things like that, how is that in reality?	
144.	P	Well it's okay because I get help like, I say I do not understand it and can you do this, can you like help me read it or something like tell me what the word means	809 concerns about difficulty of lessons appeased due to receiving help  810 able to say when you are unable to do something and request help
145.	I	Sure, okay I am really interested in that so who do you normally say that to?	
146.	P	In science, Miss [xxxxx], the teacher, English probably yeah and maths	811 speaking to class teacher directly about needing help with the work
147.	I	Okay and is that the class teacher themselves or someone that is in the class helping?	
148.	P	The class teacher, once they are like done teaching I just go to them and ask	812 able to wait until the teacher is done teaching and then ask them to help
149.	I	And that works quite well does it?	
150.	P	Yeah sometimes it does, otherwise if I do not- if I still do not get the words I try I try	813 normally ask the teacher for support help you
151.	I	Okay good, and they are normally quite good at explaining at what you have to do and what not?	
152.	P	Yeah they like to repeat it if they need to	
153.	I	Okay to they know that sometimes that you need that, that bit of help to you think?	
154.	P	Yes yeah some of them do I think	814 some teachers know that you need a little bit of help
155.	I	And have you ever spoken to them about having dyslexia?	
156.	P	No because when I was in year 7 the teacher did not know, so I told my mum and then my mum informed the school, and then Mr [SENCo's name] told the teachers about the dyslexia	815 identified that teachers did not know you are dyslexic and told a parent to informed the school
157.	I	Okay, do you- do you erm do you think it was helpful for them to know about it?	
158.	P	Yeah otherwise like they'll be like why do you not have a higher grades than you- like why you not hitting target and stuff like that	816 helpful for teachers to know you have dyslexia so they do not wonder why you don't have higher grades
159.	I	Sure okay so and knowing that there is some things that you find difficult takes the pressure off in that sense	

160.	P	Yeah	
161.	I	Good yeah. Er is there any- have there ever been any teachers that you've spoken to about it all has it always been sort of you have asked mum to do it	
162.	P	I just ask mum	817 easier to ask mum to inform teachers about dyslexia
163.	I	Yeah is it easier to do it that way round?	
164.	P	Yeah	817 easier to ask mum to inform teachers about dyslexia
165.	I	Why is that?	
166.	P	Because it is like nerve-wracking like when you- when you are trying to tell the teacher something but there is like other pupils like going over there, so I just found it uncomfortable	818 it is nerve wracking trying to tell the teacher you have dyslexia  819 it is uncomfortable to talk to a teacher about dyslexia with other pupils around
167.	I	Yeah, it is something that you might want a bit of privacy to do isn't it	
168.	P	Yeah	
169.	I	Do you think erm do you think that now that they know you could have a talk to them about what you find hard what you find better?	
170.	P	Yeah	
171.	I	Yeah, would it be easier now?	
172.	P	It was easier than when they didn't know	820 it is easier to talk to teachers about difficulties now they know you have dyslexia
173.	I	Yeah okay that is good, okay so perhaps would you say that one good thing about erm helpful for other pupils with dyslexia to do perhaps would be to make sure that their teachers know	
174.	P	Yeah so then they do not like put pressure on you, and if you want to speak to them, then just speak to them after class so when other pupils are not there, or ask your mum or if not Mr [SENCo's name] to tell everyone	821 helpful for teachers to know when a student has dyslexia is they do not put too much pressure on you  822 some advice about disclosing dyslexia to a teacher is to ask to speak to them after class when nobody else is around  823 if you are unable to talk to a teacher yourself about dyslexia, ask a parent or a SENCO to tell teachers
175.	I	Okay ah that is a good idea so yeah a better way might be to tell one teacher that would be able to talk to lots of other teachers	
176.	P	Yeah yeah	
177.	I	Well okay that is a good tip to know okay that is good hehe. Erm has there been anything else that has been- because that sounds like it has been quite helpful for you, as there been anything else that has been helpful in terms of getting through doing your work and	
178.	P	Erm me like trying- er like I have to be like independent like that is what they say, so like I try to be independent	824 it has been helpful to try and be independent most of

		most of the time	the time
179.	I	Okay what kind of things do you do to try and be independent?	
180.	P	Like when you are doing the tests, you know reading it out like reading it does not make sense so, if like if you are on the test er put your hand up so that the teacher can help you so that you can probably get higher grades. I never put my hand up in the tests to ask for reading, I tried it myself	825 it is important to try and work out something out yourself first before putting hand up
181.	I	Oh I see so you used to- is this what you use to do what you do now? *Participant nods for yes*	
182.	I	Okay so you never put your hand up?	
183.	P	No, 'cause then it is like you want to be independent like the others	826 you should try and be independent like other pupils
184.	I	Oh I see what you mean, sorry	
185.	P	So so then you want to read it yourself	
186.	I	Yes okay so you want to have a go at it first, and make sure you can try and do it before you end up putting a hand up?	
187.	P	Yeah	
188.	I	That is a good idea, So for you being a little bit independent and trying hard at something first yourself is better than just straight away putting your hand up	
189.	P	Yeah	
190.	I	That makes a lot sense. Okay good, and is there anything else that you have found helpful or done to sort of help?	
191.	P	No I do not think so	
192.	I	I was wondering about- I remember you said that one of the things you were worried about was erm friends, and whether you have had the same sort of supportiveness from your friends	
193.	P	Oh yeah I did tell my friends who were like, okay with it, they were like if I ever need help I asked them and they help me if they know and if they do not know that they asked me to- they tell me to tell the teacher, yeah	827 able to tell friends about dyslexia who were okay with it  828 friends offered to help whenever they are able to, or if they cannot then, they say to ask the teacher
194.	I	So quite similar to primary school?	
195.	P	Yeah	
196.	I	Yeah in that sense. So that is another another thing that you do sometimes if you want a little bit of support you'll	
197.	P	I asked my friends yeah	
198.	I	Okay and erm did you talk to your friends about having dyslexia self or did you get someone else to do it or/	
199.	P	/I told them that I did not tell th- but I just said that I have dyslexia and they were like 'cool'	827 able to tell friends about dyslexia who were okay with it
200.	I	Did they know what that means?	
201.	P	Well I did say it is like when they- when erm I found it hard to like understands stuff	829 explaining dyslexia to peers as finding it hard to understand stuff
202.	I	Okay	
203.	P	Yeah	
204.	I	Yeah so that was enough information?	
205.	P	Yeah	
206.	I	What was that like having to tell a new group of people?	
207.	P	It was like nervous like you have cramps in your belly and stuff, butterflies yeah	830 feeling nervous telling friends about dyslexia

208.	I	But it worked out okay?	
209.	P	Yeah	
210.	I	Yeah okay good, so that that- so how come erm it was- you had enough courage to do it with your friends but not with your teachers?	
211.	P	Because because like your fr- like the teachers they are there to just like teach pupils and stuff and like help them with their like situations and stuff, and your friends are like understanding, like they stand up for you if you were getting bullied or something like that, and erm so they help you, so I just said why not just tell them, yeah	831 easier to talk to friends about dyslexia as they are more understanding than teachers  832 friends are understanding and want to help you so why not tell them about dyslexia?
212.	I	Mmm okay that is a good way to look at it	
213.	P	'cause in primary I got bullied for being in the lower set	833 being bullied for being in a lower set in primary school
214.	I	Oh really?	
215.	P	In year six	
216.	I	Ah which is not very helpful as it	
217.	P	No	
218.	I	Ah okay but I like the- I like- I like that it did not put you off sort of telling people about things and you obviously had quite a lot of courage to do that	
219.	P	Yeah	
220.	I	So that is good heheh. Okay so you have a nice group of supportive friends now, some of the work is quite hard but you s- you've kind worked out a few ways of	
221.	P	Trying to do it yeah	
222.	I	Trying to do it, is there anything that you erm still find that you are not really getting on with or not getting enough help with?	
223.	P	Errrm sometimes science because like pupils are like always over the teacher so I do not really want to go over the, so I just like... I try and push myself to do it that is really hard to understand it	834 science continues to be difficult because it is difficult to talk to the teacher because pupils are always around  835 not wanting to speak to a teacher about work in front of other pupils
224.	I	Yeah and is that again because of the longer words?	
225.	P	Yeah and like the words that you have to use are like the scientific words, you cannot use like 'tummy' you have to use 'stomach' and other things yeah	836 lessons hard when you have to use long scientific words
226.	I	Yeah and stomach is a lot harder to spell than tummy isn't it hehehe	
227.	P	Yeah	
228.	I	Okay so so you have not been able to get quite as much help with that because the other childr... Young people are round the teacher so that/	
229.	P	/Sometimes I like lineup but then I am like urrgghh, and then I just go and sit back down. And the teachers normally tell me to read what I write and it is quite hard because you do not wanna tell that other pupils what you have written	837 giving up asking for help because you do not want other pupils to hear what you have written
230.	I	Yeah yeah sure. Is there anything you could do apart from speaking to the teacher, who is there anything that you think would help you in science?	
231.	P	No I cannot think	
232.	I	No	

233.	P	No	
234.	I	Okay I wondered if erm yeah I guess it is about the words isn't it	
235.	P	Yeah	
236.	I	And how erm I wondered if there was a way that perhaps like the teacher could help you that before they start the lesson maybe?	
237.	P	I do ask for like sheets and then me and my mum do it, like my mum helps me	838 asking teachers for extra sheets that you can take home and do with a parent
238.	I	Oh yeah	
239.	P	Yeah	
240.	I	Okay do you find that quite helpful to take back home and do it with/	
241.	P	My mum yeah	839 helpful to have extra sheets which you can complete at home
242.	I	That is good okay, so that is something that has worked in the past?	
243.	I	Good okay erm and has there been anything but has gone really really well or something that you are really enjoying since you have arrived at secondary school?	
244.	P	Errrr PE	840 enjoying PE at secondary school
245.	I	PE okay	
246.	P	Yeah because then you do not have to do any work, you are like- it is not confusing, you just have to do like gymnastics, erm benchball, dodgeball, dance and so on yeah	841 PE is enjoyable because you do not have to do written work
247.	I	Yeah so when you say there is not any work, do you mean there is not any written work?	
248.	P	Yeah, and you do not have to like read anything out, you just have to just like you normally work with like some groups, groups or partners or trios or something like that and then you just like, make up a routine like, you fit all your ideas together and then yeah	842 PE is good because you do not have to read and you get to work with others to create something
249.	I	So in that sense that's that's playing to your strengths because there is not that bit that you find difficult but obviously you enjoy the practical side	
250.	P	Yeah	
251.	I	Of doing the gymnastics or whatever it is	
252.	P	Yeah	
253.	I	Okay to PE is a good one, is there any other subjects like that for you?	
254.	P	Errrrm cooking	843 enjoying cooking at secondary school
255.	I	Cooking, yeah?	
256.	P	Yeah but I do not like doing the inves- erm the step-by-step guide after, it is really hard to explain	844 enjoying the practical side of a lesson but not the writing up afterwards
257.	I	Okay so you do the practical bit to begin with and then you have to write all the step-by-step guide down	
258.	P	Yeah if you finish doing the cooking thing then you do it	
259.	I	Ahhh	
260.	P	Yeah	
261.	I	So are you sort of trying to take your time to sort of hehehehe	
262.	P	Hehehe yeah sometimes	
263.	I	Hahaha	
264.	P	But then you get rushed to do it so you have to just get it	

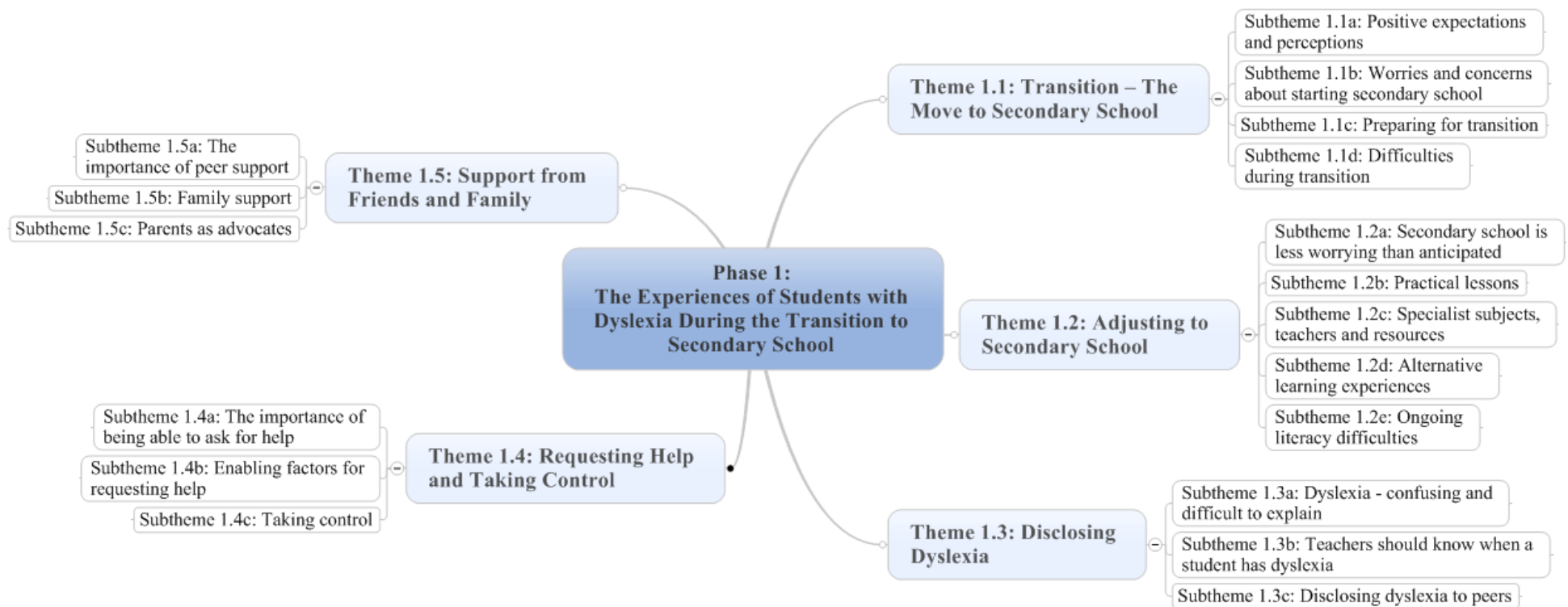


		over and done with	
265.	I	Yeah okay that is good hehe, okay anything else about secondary school that you think has been really good or really, really exciting?	
266.	P	Meeting new people and lessons, some of the lessons like German because I have never done German before, learning like the German words and stuff yeah	845 meeting new people has been good at secondary school  846 getting to do new lessons has been good
267.	I	So you quite like learning another language?	
268.	P	Sometimes hehe	
269.	I	Hahaha why do you say sometimes?	
270.	P	Because I think most of the languages are hard, but with German they take it like step-by-step so you learn like how to say your name, then your age, where you live and what you like to eat and stuff, and then you move onto like the harder stuff, like the harder sets, so like putting it into sentences and why you like it, so like the sports and stuff yeah	847 learning most languages is difficult, but in German a step-by-step approach is taken which is helpful
271.	I	Okay so that kind of slow step-by-step build up, that makes it okay	
272.	P	Yeah	848 taking a small steps approach to learning is helpful
273.	I	Okay good that might be a good thing to have in all subjects?	
274.	P	Yeah heehe	
275.	I	Okay good and is there- is there anything that you had in primary school that you miss all you wish that you should have had in secondary school?	
276.	P	That you did not have most of the lessons that you have now, I would hehe	
277.	I	Hehehe what do you mean, say a little bit more	
278.	P	Like because in primary you do English maths, maybe sometimes science sometimes music, music we did like once a week, so er so that was like you have your schedule like its English maths, and maths English	849 in primary school are less subject to focus on and it is easier to follow the schedule
279.	I	So that was easier to get by?	
280.	P	Yeah because you only have like two or three subjects that you need to really focus on, but like here you need to focus on a lot more	850 it is harder in secondary school because you have to focus on more subjects
281.	I	Oh I see, so the thing that you miss is that-there is not so much to/	
282.	P	/Focus on	
283.	I	Kind of focus on, yeah	
284.	P	So your brain does not go zzzzzzzz and then like ding! *Performs action as if her brain is being zapped*	
285.	I	Hahaha okay so it makes it harder because there are lots of different things to think about?	
286.	P	Yeah	
287.	I	Yeah okay that makes sense, it is more difficult perhaps, yeah. Do you have a way to kind of stay organised?	
288.	P	We have a planner, for homework	851 using a plan to keep organise with homework
289.	I	Does that help?	
290.	P	Err and you have like the periodic table and spelling words and a timeline for maths, so yeah	
291.	I	So bits and pieces that you used to kind of help you in each lesson?	
292.	P	Yeah	
293.	I	Okay excellent. Good okay anything else that you would	

		not tell me about either primary or secondary, or anything that you think it would be good for me to know?	
294.	P	Errrr... No no	
295.	I	No okay good will we have done quite a lot of talking so that is very good	
296.	P	Yeah	
297.	I	Okay so last question then, erm if you were trying to think about things that you might tell a year six er student who had dyslexia and they were saying oh I am a bit worried about coming to school, coming to secondary school, is there anything that you as a- now a year eight with dyslexia, is there anything that you would say to them or advise them all want them to know about?	
298.	P	Erm if you are like worried coming into year seven, erm first tell the teachers so that they know that you have got dyslexia, erm if you do not know like- know like most of the things like in science and English and you do not wanna go up to the teacher, then maybe after class you can talk to her about it, or get some extra work that you could do at home with your parents or something like that, and erm like try, try and like make friends make friends and then once you get used to your friends tell them so that they can help you to say you are not alone, but you have got support and yeah	<p>852 if you are worried about coming into year seven you should first tell the teacher that you have dyslexia</p> <p>853 if there are things you do not know in your lessons you could go and talk to a teacher after class</p> <p>854 if you are struggling in your lessons you could ask for extra work to do with your parents</p> <p>855 try to make friends in secondary school, and once you are friendly with them tell them about your dyslexia so they can help you and you are not alone</p>
299.	I	Some good- good advice there I reckon, okay anything else?	
300.	P	And erm if you feel like this people are laughing at you when you spell something, just like ignore them because it is there opinion and they do not know- er what you got like dyslexia so, they are like- they think that they brainy but like maybe they are not actually, so yeah	<p>856 you should just ignore people that you think might be laughing at your spelling</p> <p>857 people who laugh at your spelling probably do not know that you have dyslexia so think they are brainier than you but they are not</p>
301.	I	That makes sense, very good okay. Happy for me to turn that off now?	
302.	P	Yeah	
303.	I	Yeah sure?	
304.	P	Yeah	

## Appendix 15

### Thematic Map for Phase 1



## Appendix 16

### Working Code List Extract

All identified codes were copied into this working codebook and placed into an overarching area. Where appropriate, some codes were included within multiple areas. Each new code was assigned a number to ensure it could be easily searched for across the transcripts. Where a plus symbol is used, this indicates the number of times the code has been used across different transcripts. All codes are colour coded; enabling the researcher to quickly identify in which transcript the code was identified. The full Working Code List is included on the data CD attached.

Code Area	Code
Perceptions of transition and secondary school	<p>01 Transition is going to be hard</p> <p>02 Secondary school work will be harder</p> <p>03 Reading in secondary school will be harder</p> <p>04 English will be harder in secondary school</p> <p>08 Won't get as much support because of age</p> <p>09 Worried about not being able to read/spell something</p> <p>93 worried about not getting the right grades in secondary</p> <p>94 worried dyslexia will stop from reaching potential</p> <p>103 worried about losing equipment in secondary</p> <p>145 concerns around getting into preferred secondary school</p> <p>146 appealing in order to get into chosen secondary school</p> <p>194 feeling nervous about transition</p> <p>196 nervous about making new friends</p> <p>199 hoping that you have teachers that are nice at transition</p> <p>286 feeling a bit more worried about transition</p> <p>291 concerns about getting into a secondary school</p> <p>301 concern about moving to a different school as a friend</p> <p>306 worried secondary school would be boring and not fun</p> <p>379 worried about transition because levels were lower than peers</p> <p>380 scared about what other people would think of you at secondary school</p> <p>382 worried about not knowing anyone and what they would think of your levels</p> <p>383 worried about the amount of people that will be a secondary school</p> <p>386 previous difficulties with maths and English adding to concerns of the subject at secondary school</p> <p>404 still feeling nervous at the start of secondary school</p> <p>441 scared about wearing own clothes at transition</p> <p>504 hoping for support with English as previously relied on friends</p> <p>517 worried about getting lost at secondary school</p> <p>302 worried about not having any friends</p> <p>457 transition is hard because it feels like a new start</p> <p>593 transition was hard because of the lack of information about secondary school</p> <p>595 previously got into trouble primary, worried about doing the same at</p>

	<p>secondary</p> <p>597 worried about levels decreasing due to being scared at secondary school</p> <p>598 scared having to meet new people</p> <p>601 worried that levels would go down when coming to secondary school</p> <p>610 it would have been helpful to know more about support on offer at secondary</p> <p>611 knowing about support on offer at secondary would make you feel more safe</p> <p>622 tried to get opinions of teachers about secondary school</p> <p>623 it was helpful talking to teachers about secondary school</p> <p>679 worried that lessons at secondary school will be hard +</p> <p>706 nervous about starting secondary school</p> <p>707 wanting mum to take to secondary school as feeling nervous</p> <p>785 worried you would be unable to complete work at secondary</p> <p>786 worried about lessons in secondary school which have scientific words</p> <p>787 worried about not being able to make many friends</p> <p>788 worried about moving to secondary and losing peer support</p> <p>799 nervous at first day of school, cramps and stomach</p> <p>801 scared of spelling something incorrectly and a peer would see and start laughing</p> <p>92 both confident and worried about transition</p> <p>285 feeling the same as everybody else about transition</p> <p>519 after first week, not worried about secondary school</p> <p>500 getting to move around with lots of teachers as positive</p> <p>83 not worried about transition + +</p> <p>42 excited to start secondary school + +</p> <p>43 making new friends is exciting</p> <p>88 aspects of secondary school lessons might be fun + +</p> <p>104 starting secondary is exciting</p> <p>105 extracurricular activities are positive</p> <p>143 getting into secondary school is positive</p> <p>144 secondary school has a good and helpful special educational needs department</p> <p>148 looking forward to secondary school in order to get away from bullies in primary school</p> <p>149 looking forward to meeting new people</p> <p>283 secondary school lessons will offer more practical elements compared to primary</p> <p>284 looking forward to secondary school because the lessons will be better (more practical)</p> <p>294 enrichment is an appealing aspect of secondary school</p> <p>497 excited to leave primary school</p> <p>498 counting down the days until primary school ends</p> <p>499 happy about the start secondary school as it made things better</p> <p>507 excited about PE at secondary school</p> <p>613 excited about secondary school teachers because they are fun</p> <p>667 looking forward to new experiences in secondary school</p> <p>668 looking forward to secondary school work</p> <p>672 looking forward to transition</p>
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	<p>673 looking forward to experience a secondary school as did not like primary school</p> <p>790 looking forward to making new friends</p> <p>791 looking forward to being in the same lessons as friends and not being alone</p> <p>800 get used to secondary school by second week</p> <p>232 it is important to have confidence during transition</p> <p>233 it is important to be able to ask teachers to support during transition</p>
Things that were difficult during transition	<p>57 difficulties with school building</p> <p>59 difficulties with school timetable +</p> <p>86 transition is stressful</p> <p>87 meeting new people is stressful</p> <p>196 experiences of bullying during transition to secondary school</p> <p>343 it takes a few weeks to get used to calling teachers by their surname</p> <p>389 no discussion of continuing support at secondary school prior to transition</p> <p>397 lack of information about secondary school prior to transition</p> <p>399 desire to know about the types of support that could be offered at secondary prior to transition</p> <p>400 being in a new place with new people was worrying</p> <p>401 not knowing how the systems work is worrying</p> <p>423 it is difficult to get used to lots of different teachers</p> <p>424 lack of self-confidence to get involved with new lessons</p> <p>425 not confident in front of lots of new teachers which was hard</p> <p>426 being quiet in lessons at the start of secondary school</p> <p>518 getting lost at secondary school in the first week</p> <p>521 getting used to secondary school is hard</p> <p>522 getting used to homework is hard</p> <p>523 getting used to lots of different classes is hard</p> <p>530 having to move around the school every hour is a bit of a shock</p> <p>615 teachers did not help in terms of transition, but did say it would be all right</p> <p>636 levels went down following the transition due to being scared at the time</p> <p>685 not receiving support that was discussed prior to transition</p> <p>729 secondary school was a lot bigger than primary</p> <p>730 getting lost at secondary school</p> <p>766 building is bigger at secondary school</p> <p>768 have to re-learn way to classes after every half term</p> <p>769 gave up trying to learn timetable, just refer to it when needed</p> <p>789 not knowing anybody prior to transition</p> <p>797 teachers in primary school did not help you understand what secondary school would be like</p> <p>849 in primary school are less subject to focus on and it is easier to follow the schedule</p> <p>850 it is harder in secondary school because you have to focus on more subjects</p>
Past difficulties effecting transition/secondary	<p>595 previously got into trouble primary, worried about doing the same at secondary</p>

## Appendix 17

### Photographic Examples of Compiling Themes by Hand

This photograph demonstrates the early stages of compiling tentative themes by hand.



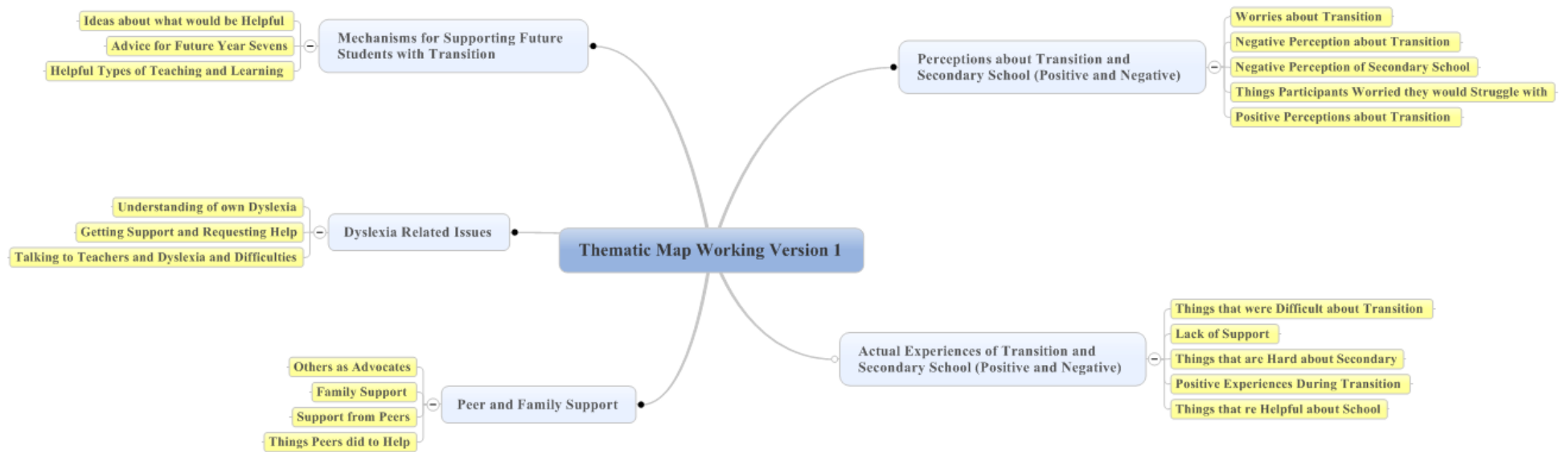
This photograph demonstrates the process of reworking and amending themes at later stage in the analytic process.



## Appendix 18

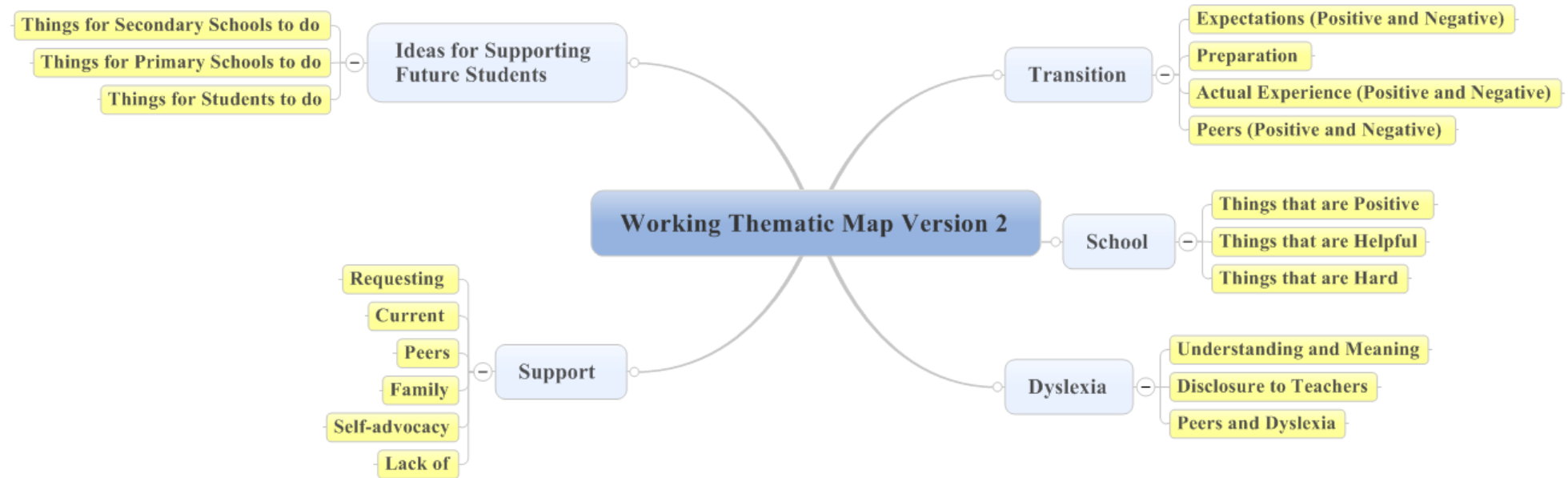
### Working Versions of the Thematic Map

First working version of the thematic map



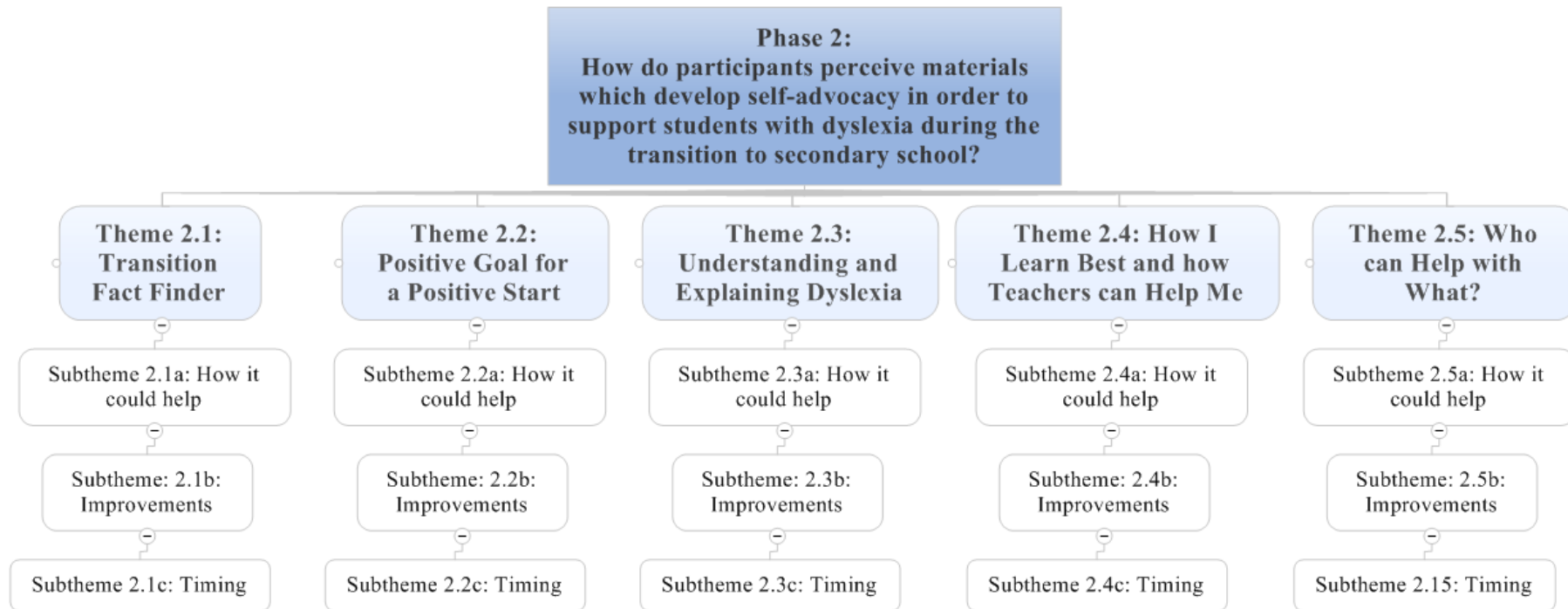


Second working version of the thematic map



## Appendix 19

### Thematic Map for Phase 2



## Appendix 20

### Ethical Approval form the University of East London

#### SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.



#### School of Psychology Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Finn', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Stratford, London E15 4LZ  
tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937  
e-mail: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk web: www.uel.ac.uk/psychology



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**Draft Material 1: Transition Fact Finder**

## Transition fact finder

When you are getting ready to move to secondary school, it is helpful to find out as much information about your new school as you can. You might have lots of things you want to ask about, or you might not know what you want to find out about yet! Either way, it is important to be able to take control of your transition, and be ready to find the facts you need.

This activity will help you to learn more about your new school in 3 ways:

- 1) You will learn what other students with dyslexia found helpful to know
- 2) You will identify anything you are worried about or would like to know
- 3) You will have a checklist of questions and answers to help you remember what to find out about.

Use the checklist below to help you find out information about secondary school. There are already some questions completed for you, which are things other students with dyslexia found it helpful to know. There are also spaces for you to write your own questions. You can find the answers to all your questions by asking teachers, other students, and family members.

Area	Question	Answer
Secondary school work	What are secondary school lessons like?	
	Is the work harder than at primary?	
	How much homework do you get?	
Reading and writing	What do I do if I can't read something?	
	What if I make a spelling mistake?	
	Will I have to read out loud?	
Types of	What help is there for dyslexic pupils?	

	Can you get help with reading and writing?	
Getting help with problems	Which teachers can I talk to if I have a problem?	
	Are there other pupils I can talk to about secondary?	
Afterschool clubs and enrichment	What afterschool clubs do you have?	
	Do you get to do any enrichment?	
Information	How many pupils are in each class?	

	What is the building like?	
	What happens if I can't find my classes?	
Meeting new people	When can I meet other year 7s?	
	What can I do to make new friends?	
Problems with peers	Who can I talk to if I have a problem with other pupils?	
	What can I do if it is hard to make friends?	

## Appendix 22

### Draft Material 2: Positive Goals for a Positive Start

## Positive Goals for a Positive Start

The thought of starting secondary school might seem overwhelming as there are lots of new things to manage. One way to feel more positive about starting secondary is to focus on the strengths that will help you be more successful. It can also help to identify some goals you would like to achieve at secondary school.

This activity will help you feel more positive about starting secondary in 3 ways:

- 1) You will identify strengths that can help you succeed
- 2) You will think of times of have been successful in the past
- 3) You will set goals which are achievable

Look carefully at the scaling sheet and think about what strengths you have. Rate each one on the scale and identify which you rated highest.

### Scaling Sheet

1. I like having lots of friendships.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

2. I like trying new things.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always



3. I have determination and try hard to succeed.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

4. I am good at working with my hands.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

5. I can keep calm under pressure, and don't get overly stressed.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

6. I can tell people if I have a problem.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

7. I can be funny and enjoy making others laugh.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

8. I can think about logically to solve a problem.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

9. I try to work things out by myself.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never					Sometimes					Always

10. I am creative and think of new ways to solve problems.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never					Sometimes					Always

11. I help others whenever I can.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never					Sometimes					Always

12. I am good at speaking in front of others

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never					Sometimes					Always

13. I like doing group work, or working with other people.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never					Sometimes					Always

14. I can normally see things through until the end.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never					Sometimes					Always

15. I am good at listening to what people say

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

16. I am athletic and good at sports.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

17. I am honest, and tell people the truth.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

18. I am appreciative when people help me.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

19. I am polite and ask for things nicely.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

20. I am good at controlling my feelings and behaviours.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

21. I am good at planning, and think carefully before making decisions.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

22. I am good at taking charge of a situation.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

23. I work well when the lessons are practical.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

Goal number 1: (What would you like to achieve?)		
By this date: (When you will achieve your goal by)		
Outcome: (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
Scale it: (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10	
What have you done already to get to this point? • • •		
Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed? • • •		
Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal? • • •		
Next steps: (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	

Goal number 2: (What would you like to achieve?)		
By this date: (When you will achieve your goal by)		
Outcome: (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
Scale it: (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10	
What have you done already to get to this point? • • •		
Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed? • • •		
Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal? • • •		
Next steps: (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	

Goal number 3: (What would you like to achieve?)		
By this date: (When you will achieve your goal by)		
Outcome: (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
Scale it: (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10	
What have you done already to get to this point? • • •		
Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed? • • •		
Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal? • • •		
Next steps: (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	

Draft Material 3: Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia

## Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia

Dyslexia can be hard to understand and even harder to explain to your friends and teachers. This might be because dyslexia affects you in a number of ways, not just with reading and writing. Also, not all people with dyslexia find the same things difficult!

This activity will help you understand and explain dyslexia in 3 ways:

- 1) It will give you a simple explanation of dyslexia
- 2) It will help you identify what your dyslexia means for you
- 3) It will help you make a script to use for talking to friends or teachers

Read this passage with an adult, to help you understand more about dyslexia:

Dyslexia is a type of learning difference which usually makes it harder for people to read and write. This can mean that they sometimes need help with things such as reading work and spelling words. Dyslexia is not the same for everyone, but some people also find some of these things hard:

- Sounding out new words
- Processing the things people say
- Remembering things that were said to them
- Working out problems in maths
- Being organised and trying not to lose things

People are normally born with dyslexia, and it just means a small part of their brain works differently. People with dyslexia can be very smart, even though they find reading and writing difficult, so having dyslexia is definitely not a bad thing. People with dyslexia often have strengths in other areas, such as being artistic, sporty, using computers and many more.



Complete each section of the script maker below by ticking the boxes that apply to you and writing information in the spaces provided

I would like to tell you that I have dyslexia. Having dyslexia means that...

<input type="checkbox"/>	I find reading difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	It takes me longer to read things
<input type="checkbox"/>	The letters move about on the page when I read
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find writing hard
<input type="checkbox"/>	It takes me longer to write things
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find it hard to spell some words
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Dyslexia is not only to do with reading and writing, it also means that...

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes it takes me longer to process what people say
<input type="checkbox"/>	It makes it difficult for me to remember things
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remembering what people say is hard
<input type="checkbox"/>	I get nervous about speaking in front of the rest of the class
<input type="checkbox"/>	Being organised can be a challenge
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Things that help me include...

	When adults help me read and write
	Going out of class for extra help
	When my friends help me read
	When friends help me with spelling
	Using coloured overlays/glasses to stop the words moving around
	When I can ask people questions

I would also like you to know that...

	Dyslexia is not a bad thing
	People with dyslexia are born with it
	Having dyslexia means a small part of your brain works in a different way
	People with dyslexia are good at loads of things besides reading or writing

Thank you very much for listening, is there anything you would like to ask me about my dyslexia?

You may wish to cut out the sentences you ticked or wrote and stick them onto a new piece of paper, to help you create a script. You can then use this to help you tell other people about your dyslexia!

## Appendix 24

### Draft Material 4: How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me

#### How I learn best and how teachers can help me

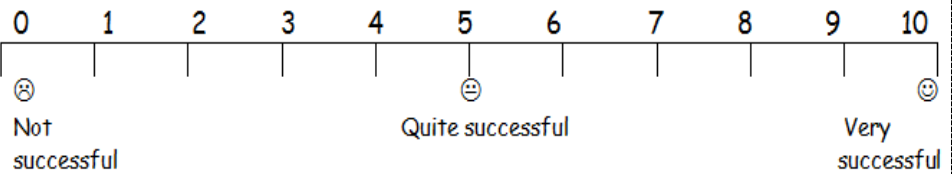
Sometimes it can be difficult to ask teachers for help, but if you are more aware of your strengths and areas you need help with, this can be a lot easier!

This activity will help you feel more confident about asking for help in 3 ways:

- 1) You will identify your strengths so teachers can help you build on these
- 2) You will work out what has helped you in the past
- 3) You will think about things you still find difficult

Fill in this questionnaire to help work out at which lessons you are most successful and if there are any you feel are more difficult. The questionnaire will help you to work out what has allowed you to be successful (so your teachers can make sure this continues). It also gets you to think about what else you or your teachers could do to help you.

## Reading



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

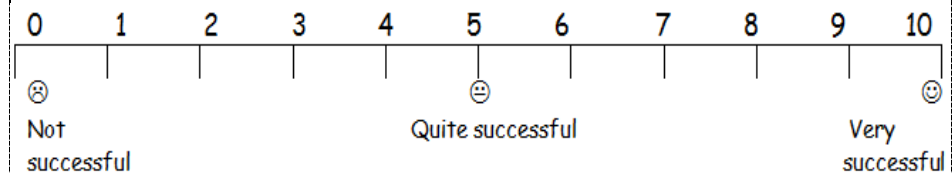
Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 

## Writing



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

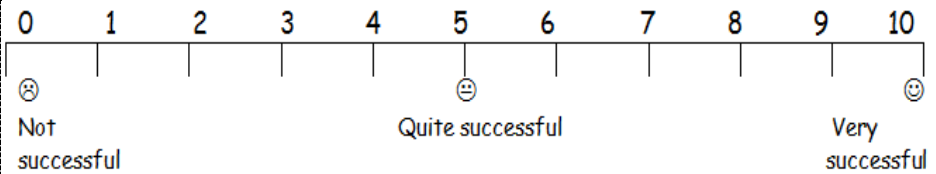
Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
-

## Maths



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

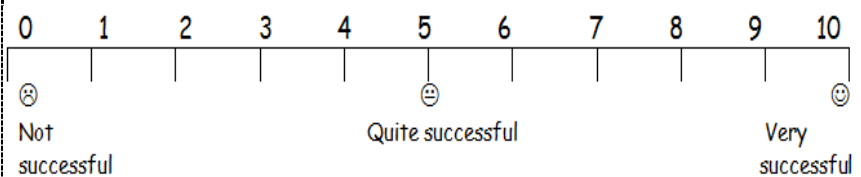
Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 

## Science



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

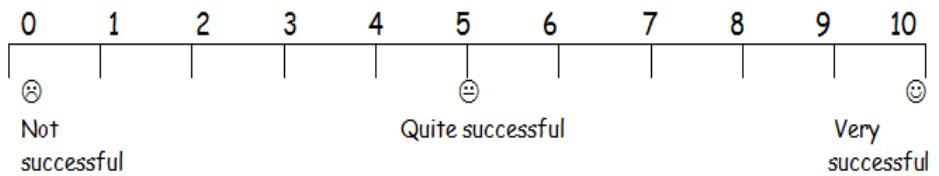
Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
-

## Art



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

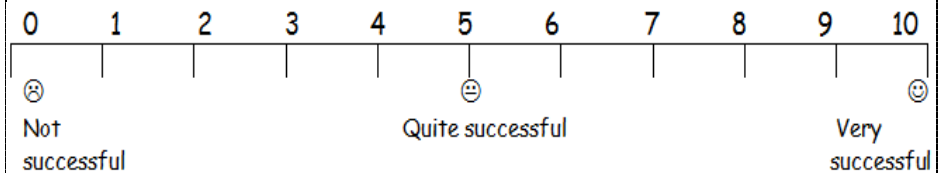
Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 

## PE



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

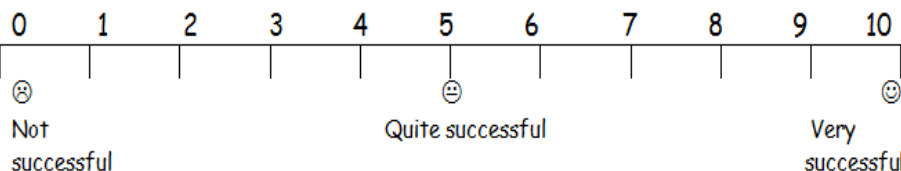
Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
-

## Drama



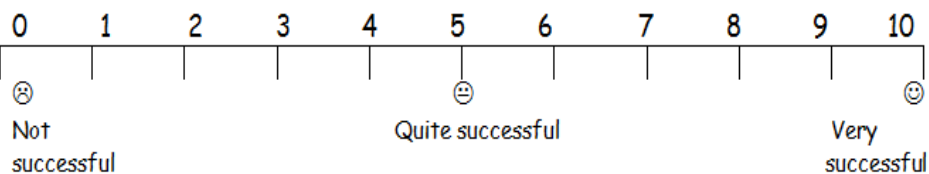
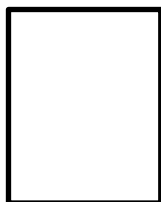
I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
-

<div></div>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	☹					☹					☺
	Not successful			Quite successful				Very successful			

I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 

Now you have completed the questionnaire, please list your top 2 most successful lessons:

1.

2.

Please list the 2 things you struggle with the most:

1.

2.



Across all of the lessons in the questionnaire, list the things which have helped you be more successful?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Across all of the lessons in the questionnaire, list anything you identified might help you to be more successful?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

When speaking to your secondary school teachers about getting extra support, it might be helpful to use this page to remind yourself of your strengths, the things that help you, and the types of support you might need.

**Draft Material 5: Who Can Help With What?**

## Who can help with what?

When going through a new challenge like moving to secondary school, it is really important to know who you can rely on for support. Different people can help in different ways, so it is important to know who would be good at helping with what!

This activity will help you learn about your support network in 3 ways:

- 1) You will identify supportive people in the different areas of your life
- 2) You will consider who would be best at helping with different issues
- 3) You will think about who could help you answer your questions from the transition fact finder session.

For this activity, there is a page for each area of support; one for family, one for peers, one for school staff and one for you. Three of the sections have boxes for you to write the names of support people. Once you have identified all the people who can support you in each area, cut and stick the example issues into the person's box who you think will be able to help you the best



# Family

Name of support person

Issues they could support you with



# Peers

Name of support person

Issues they could support you with




# School Staff

Name of support person

Issues they could support you with



# Myself

Issues you can manage by yourself

## Example issues and questions

I keep getting lost at school
I am nervous about starting school
I am scared to put my hand up in class
I am worried English will be too hard at secondary
I would like to start playing football after school
I'm not sure teachers will help me
I need some help telling people I have dyslexia
What happens if you misbehave in secondary?
What are the best afterschool clubs?
Who can I ask for help with spellings?
I would like to see friends after school
I need help with my homework
I don't like walking to school on my own
Some of my peers are not being nice
How can I meet new people?
I don't understand my timetable
I don't get to finish my work because I run out of time
I would like to use the computer more often
What do older students think about secondary?
Who can I ask about my levels
I would like to tell someone about my day
I need help talking to teachers

Final Material 1: Transition Fact Finder

## Transition fact finder

When you are getting ready to move to secondary school, it is helpful to find out as much information about your new school as you can. You might have lots of things you want to ask about, or you might not know what you want to find out about yet! Either way, it is important to be able to take control of your transition, and be ready to find the facts you need.

This activity will help you to learn more about your new school in 3 ways:

- 1) You will learn what other students with dyslexia found helpful to know
- 2) You will identify anything you are worried about or would like to know
- 3) You will have a checklist of questions and answers to help you remember what to find out about.

Use the checklist below to help you find out information about secondary school. There are already some questions completed for you, which are things other students with dyslexia found it helpful to know. There are also spaces for you to write your own questions. You can find the answers to all your questions by asking teachers, other students, and family members. Once you get to secondary school, use the tick box to see if your answer was correct, or whether it needs changing.

### Top Tip

Why not take your checklist when you visit your new school!?



Area	Question	Answer	✓/X
Secondary school work	What are secondary school lessons like?		
	Is the work harder than at primary?		
	How much homework do you get?		
Reading and writing	What do I do if I can't read something?		
	What if I make a spelling mistake?		
	Will I have to read out loud?		

Types of support	What help is there for dyslexic pupils?		
	Can you get help with reading and writing?		
Getting help with problems	Which teachers can I talk to if I have a problem?		
	Are there other pupils I can talk to about secondary?		
Afterschool clubs and enrichment	What afterschool clubs do you have?		
	Do you get to do any enrichment?		

Information about the school	How many pupils are in each class?		
	What is the building like?		
	What happens if I can't find my classes?		
Meeting new people	When can I meet other year 7s?		
	What can I do to make new friends?		
Problems with peers	Who can I talk to if I have a problem with other pupils?		
	What can I do if it is hard to make friends?		

New things I might need to know in secondary school	What is a school planner and how do I use it?		
	How will I know where to go for each lesson?		

## Appendix 27

### Final Material 2: Positive Goals for a Positive Start

## Positive Goals for a Positive Start

The thought of starting secondary school might seem overwhelming as there are lots of new things to manage. One way to feel more positive about starting secondary is to focus on the strengths that will help you be more successful. It can also help to identify some goals you would like to achieve at secondary school.

This activity will help you feel more positive about starting secondary in 3 ways:

- 1) You will identify strengths that can help you succeed
- 2) You will think of times of have been successful in the past
- 3) You will set goals which are achievable

Look carefully at the scaling sheet and think about what strengths you have. Rate each one on the scale and identify which you rated highest.

### Scaling Sheet

1. I like having lots of friendships.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

2. I have determination and try hard to succeed.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

3. I am good at working with my hands.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

4. I can tell people if I have a problem.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

5. I can think about logically to solve a problem.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

6. I try to work things out by myself.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

7. I am creative and think of new ways to solve problems.

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

8. I am good at speaking in front of others

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Never					Sometimes					Always

9. I like doing group work, or working with other people.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

10. I am good at listening to what people say

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

11. I am athletic and good at sports.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

12. I am good at controlling my feelings and behaviours.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

13. I am good at planning, and think carefully before making decisions.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

14. I work well when the lessons are practical.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Sometimes					Always

Goal number 1: (What would you like to achieve?)		
By this date: (When you will achieve your goal by)		
Outcome: (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
Scale it: (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10	
What have you done already to get to this point? • • •		
Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed? • • •		
Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal? • • •		
Next steps: (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	



Goal number 2: (What would you like to achieve?)		
By this date: (When you will achieve your goal by)		
Outcome: (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
Scale it: (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10	
What have you done already to get to this point? • • •		
Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed? • • •		
Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal? • • •		
Next steps: (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	

Goal number 3: (What would you like to achieve?)		
By this date: (When you will achieve your goal by)		
Outcome: (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
Scale it: (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10	
What have you done already to get to this point? • • •		
Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed? • • •		
Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal? • • •		
Next steps: (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	

# Goal Monitoring Sheet

Use this monitoring sheet to keep track of your progress towards your goals. Just write in each of your goals in the left hand column and colour in your progress as you go. You may wish to monitor your goals by yourself, or you could ask a teacher at your secondary school to do this for you.

Goal	Progress in %									
	20		40		60		80		100	

Once you have reached 100% on a goal, why not set yourself a new challenge using the New Goal Sheet below.

## New Goal Sheet

<b>New Goal:</b> (What would you like to achieve?)		
<b>By this date:</b> (When you will achieve your goal by)		
<b>Outcome:</b> (How you know you've achieved your goal)		
<b>Scale it:</b> (Rate where you are on the scale already)	1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10	
<b>What have you done already to get to this point?</b> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul> </div>		
<b>Think of a time where you tried to achieve something similar to your goal. Was there anything that helped you succeed?</b> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul> </div>		
<b>Which of your identified strengths might help with this goal?</b> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul> </div>		
<b>Next steps:</b> (What can you do at the following times)	Today	
	Next Week	
	At Secondary	

## Appendix 28

### Final Material 3: Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia

## Understanding and Explaining Dyslexia

Dyslexia can be hard to understand and even harder to explain to your friends and teachers. This might be because dyslexia affects you in a number of ways, not just with reading and writing. Also, not all people with dyslexia find the same things difficult!

This activity will help you understand and explain dyslexia in 3 ways:

- 1) It will give you a simple explanation of dyslexia
- 2) It will help you identify what your dyslexia means for you
- 3) It will help you make a script to use for talking to friends or teachers

Read the passage on the next page with an adult, to help you understand more about dyslexia:

Dyslexia is a type of learning difference which usually makes it harder for people to read and write. It doesn't mean they can't read and write at all, but they sometimes need help with things such as reading work and spelling words. Sometimes, the words move around on the page for people with dyslexia, so they wear coloured glasses or need to read from coloured paper. Dyslexia is not the same for everyone, but some people also find some of these things hard:

- Sounding out new words
- Processing the things people say
- Remembering things that were said to them
- Working out problems in maths
- Being organised and trying not to lose things
- Using words like "there" "their" and "they're" correctly

People are normally born with dyslexia, and it just means a small part of their brain works differently. People with dyslexia can be very smart, even though they find reading and writing difficult, so having dyslexia is definitely not a bad thing. People with dyslexia often have strengths in other areas, such as being artistic, sporty, using computers and many more.

Complete each section of the script maker below by ticking the boxes that apply to you and writing information in the spaces provided

I would like to tell you that I have dyslexia. Having dyslexia means that...

<input type="checkbox"/>	I find reading difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	It takes me longer to read things
<input type="checkbox"/>	The letters move about on the page when I read
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find writing hard
<input type="checkbox"/>	It takes me longer to write things
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find it hard to spell some words
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find words like "there" "their" and "they're" confusing
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Dyslexia is not only to do with reading and writing, it also means that...

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes it takes me longer to process what people say
<input type="checkbox"/>	It makes it difficult for me to remember things
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remembering what people say is hard
<input type="checkbox"/>	I get nervous about speaking in front of the rest of the class
<input type="checkbox"/>	Being organised can be a challenge
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Things that help me include...

	When adults help me read and write
	Going out of class for extra help
	When my friends help me read
	When friends help me with spelling
	Using coloured overlays/glasses to stop the words moving around
	When I can ask people questions
	Using coloured glasses or coloured paper to help me read

I would also like you to know that...

	Dyslexia is not a bad thing
	People with dyslexia are born with it
	Having dyslexia means a small part of your brain works in a different way
	People with dyslexia are good at loads of things besides reading or writing

Thank you very much for listening, is there anything you would like to ask me about my dyslexia?

You may wish to cut out the sentences you ticked or wrote and stick them onto a new piece of paper, to help you create a script. You can then use this to help you tell other people about your dyslexia!



## Appendix 29

### Final Material 4: How I Learn Best and how Teachers can Help Me

#### How I learn best and how teachers can help me

Sometimes it can be difficult to ask teachers for help, but if you are more aware of your strengths and areas you need help with, this can be a lot easier!

This activity will help you feel more confident about asking for help in 3 ways:

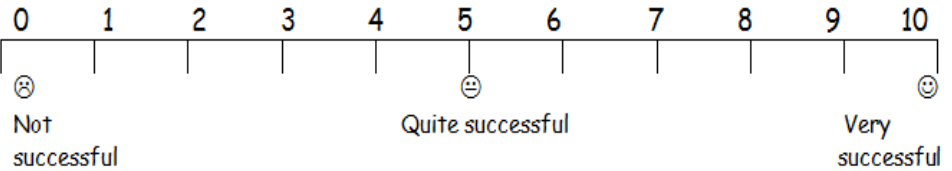
- 1) You will identify your strengths so teachers can help you build on these
- 2) You will work out what has helped you in the past
- 3) You will think about things you still find difficult

Fill in this questionnaire to help work out at which lessons you are most successful and if there are any you feel are more difficult. The questionnaire will help you to work out what has allowed you to be successful (so your teachers can make sure this continues). It also gets you to think about what else you or your teachers could do to help you. If you would rather not write your own ideas, there are some suggestions for you, which you can tick instead.

## Reading



Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:


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- 
- 

Lots of practice		Using coloured overlays/paper	
Reading about something I am interested in		Reading books at the right level for me	
Reading to an adult or friend		Reading in a quiet place with no distractions	

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

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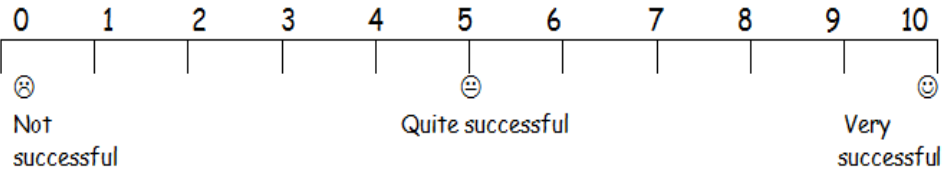
I practiced reading every day		I tried using coloured overlays or coloured paper	
I went to the library to pick some new and interesting books		The teacher helped me pick a book	
I had more chances to read with somebody		There was somewhere I could practice reading where there are no distractions	

Writing		Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		☹					☺					☺
		Not successful		Quite successful						Very successful		
<p>I am at number _____ on the scale.</p> <p>Things that have helped me get to this number are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>												
I have extra time for writing								I can use a word bank or dictionary				
My teacher gives me sentence starters								I can speak my ideas before writing them down				
When I can use a laptop or computer								When someone helps me with spellings				
<p>I would be one number higher on the scale if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>												
I was given longer on writing tasks								Teachers give me a word bank or a dictionary				
If I was given sentence starters to help me get going								I could tell my ideas to someone, and they help me plan what I write				
I am allowed to use a computer to write longer pieces of writing								Teachers help me spell check my work				

## Maths



Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I get to use things like counters or Unifix to help me work things out		When I learn my times tables off by heart	
When I practice a type of equation lots of time		When I write down my workings so I don't have to remember them	
When somebody reads me the question		When I get longer to think	

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

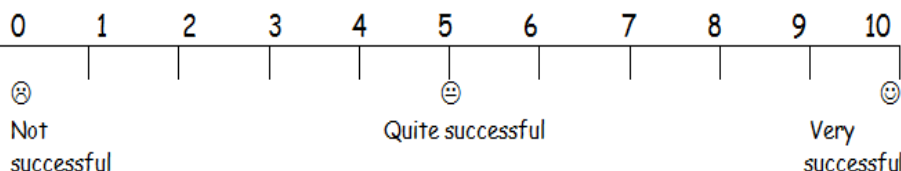
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My teachers let me use things to help me keep count		I practiced my times tables more so I know them	
I did the same questions until I got them right at least three times		I always gave my workings out	
I asked someone to help me read the question		Teachers gave me longer to work things out	

## Science



Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

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- 
- 

Getting to do lots of practicals		Working with a partner or in a group	
When someone helps me with the complicated words		When I get to do the experiment before writing about it	
When I get to watch the teacher do things while they explain the lesson		When I have key scientific words written down for me to copy	

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

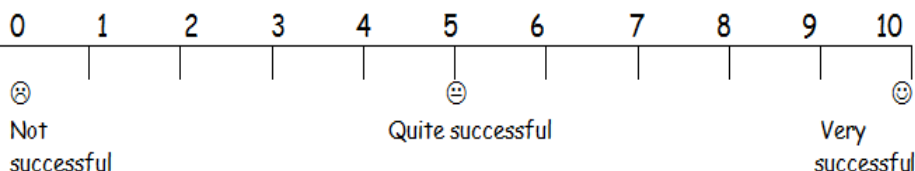
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The lessons had more practicals		We were allowed to work with a partner or in a group	
The teachers knew I needed help with complicated words		I tried to remember the experience of the experiment to help me write	
There were more demonstrations to help me understand		The teacher wrote down key words I need for the lesson	

## Art



Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?



I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

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- 
- 

Getting to work with my hands		Spending lots of time on my work	
Being very careful when I am working		Getting ideas from books and the internet	
When the teacher shows me a technique to help my work		There is not too much writing	

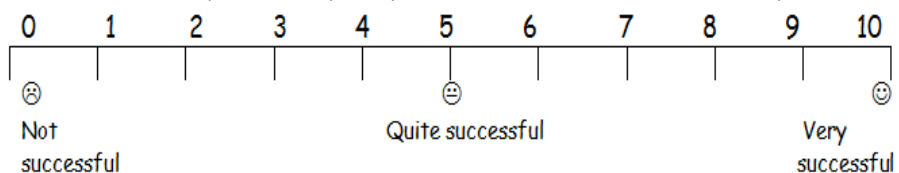
I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 

I practiced my practical techniques more often		I tried my best all the time	
I tried not to rush things		My teachers let me look at examples of the work	
Teachers spent more time showing me techniques needed for my work		I did not have to write too much	

## PE

Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?





I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:


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- 
- 

I enjoy playing sports		I practice sports with friends or outside school	
I enjoy playing as part of a team		I enjoy learning by actually having a go	
I am fit and healthy		The teacher demonstrates what I have to do	

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

- 
- 
- 

I learnt the rules of different sports		I practiced sports after school or at the weekends	
I tried to be more of a team player		I got stuck in more and just had a go	
I did more exercise so I could keep up		The teachers took more time to do demonstrations of techniques	

Drama		Where do you think your peers and teachers would rate you?										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		Not successful		Quite successful					Very successful			
<p>I am at number _____ on the scale.</p> <p>Things that have helped me get to this number are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>												
I like to perform in front of other people						I am good at making up storylines						
When there is lots of time to practice my lines						When I am assessed on my acting and not just my writing						
I get to work as part of a group						I get to see the ideas of others and watch them perform						
<p>I would be one number higher on the scale if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>												
I was braver when performing						Someone helped me write down my good storylines						
I was given time to practice my lines over and over again						There were lots of practical assessments						
I worked well with my peers and we helped each other						There were opportunities to share ideas as a class						



<div style="border: 2px solid black; width: 100px; height: 80px; margin: 10px;"></div>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	☹					☹					☺
	Not successful		Quite successful				Very successful				

I am at number \_\_\_\_\_ on the scale.

Things that have helped me get to this number are:

- 
- 
- 

I would be one number higher on the scale if:

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- 
- 

Now you have completed the questionnaire, please list your top 2 most successful lessons:

1.

2.

Please list the 2 things you struggle with the most:

1.

2.

Across all of the lessons in the questionnaire, list the things which have helped you be more successful?

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Across all of the lessons in the questionnaire, list anything you identified might help you to be more successful?

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When speaking to your secondary school teachers about getting extra support, it might be helpful to use this page to remind yourself of your strengths, the things that help you, and the types of support you might need.

## Appendix 30

### Final Material 5: Who Can Help With What?

# Who can help with what?

When going through a new challenge like moving to secondary school, it is really important to know who you can rely on for support. Different people can help in different ways, so it is important to know who would be good at helping with what!

This activity will help you learn about your support network in 3 ways:

- 1) You will identify supportive people in the different areas of your life
- 2) You will consider who would be best at helping with different issues
- 3) You will think about who could help you answer your questions from the transition fact finder session.

For this activity, there is a page for each area of support; one for family, one for peers, one for school staff and one for you. Three of the sections have boxes for you to write the names of support people. Once you have identified all the people who can support you in each area, cut and stick the example issues into the person's box who you think will be able to help you the best. You might also like to write real things that you are worried about in the 'Actual Issues' column



# Family

Name of  
support person

Issues they could support you with

Example Issue

Actual Issue



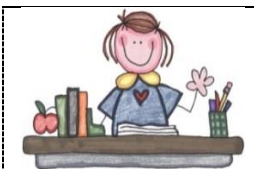
# Peers

Name of  
support person

Issues they could support you with

Example Issue

Actual Issue

# School Staff

Name of  
support person

Issues they could support you with  
Example Issue

Actual Issue




# Myself

Tick List ✓

Issues you can manage by yourself

Example Issue

Actual Issue

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

## Example issues and questions

I keep getting lost at school
I am nervous about starting school
I am scared to put my hand up in class
I am worried English will be too hard at secondary
I would like to start playing football after school
I'm not sure teachers will help me
I need some help telling people I have dyslexia
What happens if you misbehave in secondary?
What are the best afterschool clubs?
Who can I ask for help with spellings?
I would like to see friends after school
I need help with my homework
I don't like walking to school on my own
Some of my peers are not being nice
How can I meet new people?
I don't understand my timetable
I don't get to finish my work because I run out of time
I would like to use the computer more often
What do older students think about secondary?
Who can I ask about my levels
I would like to tell someone about my day
I need help talking to teachers

Now you could think about who could help you answer your questions from the transition fact finder session, and write them in the relevant box.



## Appendix 31

### Participant Overview of Draft Materials

This appendix outlines the participants' general comments regarding all five draft materials. Participants discussed overall improvements that could be made as well as whom they felt should administer the sessions with students. Finally, participants reported they felt the sessions covered all areas of transition that students with dyslexia may be worried about.

#### Overview of the Intervention Sessions

Over the course of discussing each session with the participants, there were some improvements that were suggested for multiple sessions. For example, participants discussed ensuring the sizes of boxes were big enough for students to write in. Additionally they noted the importance of spacing and formatting which makes the activities clear.

*"Umm just make the boxes bigger"*

(Mike, line 306)

Participant: *I would like space the answers out, like*

Researcher: *Space them out?*

Participant: *So like put like a like a thick line there, so then it doesn't get all mixed up*

(Holly, lines 323-325)

It was also suggested that the sessions should be presented on coloured paper, given the number of dyslexic students who may have issues with visual stress.

Participant: *Also if there was the possibility of not having it on white pieces of paper*

Researcher: *Ahh that's a very good point see*

Participant: *There are those people who are dyslexic who <inaud> have glasses or underlays but still struggle with*

Researcher: *Mmm*

Participant: *Visual stress but if you put it on different coloured*

Researcher: *Yeah*

Participant: *Paper that would help them*

(Hank, lines 158-164)

### **Session Administration**

Participants' opinions regarding who students should complete the session with varied greatly between themselves, and between each session. However, there appeared to be commonalities between participants' reasoning for completing certain tasks with certain people. For example, it was common for participants to suggest students complete a session with a parent when they perceived the activity to be more personal.

Participant: *I'd probably do it with my mum or dad cause then like no one else is there... ...Just us two*

Researcher: *Ok so you would feel more comfortable doing it with mum or dad*

Participant: *Yeah... ...Because there's other pupils around and you you may not want them to know or like if your friends are there*

(Holly, lines 128-134)

Participants often opted for students to complete session with teaching staff when they felt the activity was related to lessons and learning, as the teacher would be able to use their experience of this to support students most effectively

Participant: *I would it with a teacher*

Researcher: *Yeah ok why would you do this one with a teacher?*

Participant: *Because they like they probably have more experience with like this and stuff*

Researcher: *Yes that will be true yeah, so they would know more about the lessons and things, yeah ok and you'd feel ok doing it with a teacher?*

Participant: *Yeah*

(Jesse, 102-106)

Participants tended to suggest students complete sessions with a sibling or peer when they wanted to know information about the transition process or secondary school, often because they felt they would have undergone similar experience which could be reassuring.

Participant: *um err err say um dyslexia runs in the family... ..Um they say if you have an older brother... ..Umm an older brother like the older brother when he was younger he knows how it feels... .. And then they could ask the questionnaire to the older brother*

Researcher: *Yes absolutely yeah, so maybe a good person to ask would be*

Participant: *A person who already already been been through it*

(Walter, lines 206-214)

### **Session Administration**

All participants were asked whether they felt there were any aspects of the transition to secondary school for students with dyslexia that five sessions did not cover or address. All participants felt the sessions covered the necessary areas and no participants identified the need for an additional session.

*“Um no I think I think it's all fine I think it covers everything what you need to know about like feeling nervous about secondary and dyslexia”*

(Mike, line 468)

### **Overview**

Participant identified a number of formatting improvements that they felt could enhance the materials overall. These included more space to write, clearer spacing and the use of coloured paper to support students with visual stress. These general

suggestions were used when developing the final materials. Participants tended to differ on who they felt should be administering the materials, depending on the type of activity involved. As such, the final materials do not prescribe who students should complete them with, allowing them to work with whoever they feel most comfortable. Finally, participants felt that overall, the materials covered all the areas of transition to secondary school that a students with dyslexia may require support with. As such, they reported there was not a need for additional materials to be included.